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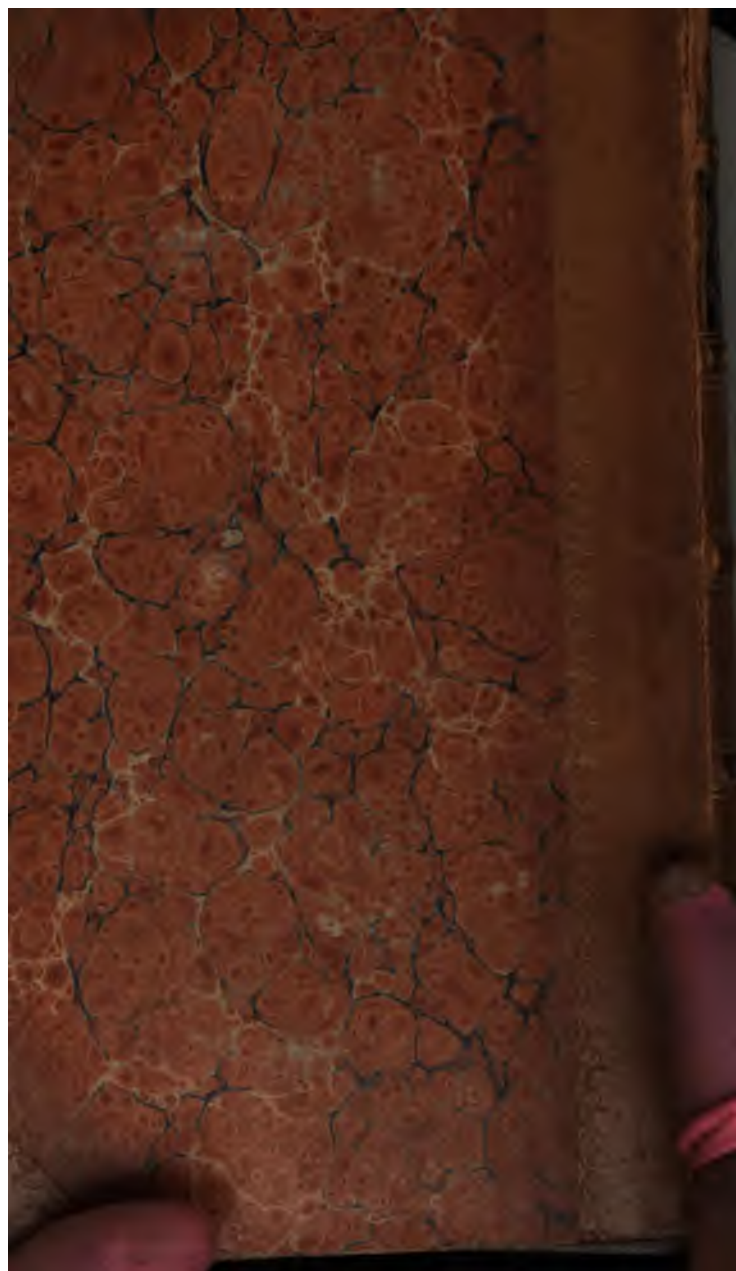
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TO
THE HONOURABLE
MR. JUSTICE PARK,

THIS LITTLE WORK

IS INSCRIBED,

AS A SMALL TOKEN OF THE DEEP VENERATION

AND GRATEFUL AFFECTION

FELT FOR HIM

BY

THE AUTHORESS.



PREFACE.


It is with feelings of deep humility, that the Compiler of the present little work presents it to the Public; and she has been solely induced so to do, in the hope of being useful to those Christian mothers, whose great delight it is to train up their little ones in the paths of Christian knowledge. She has frequently heard such mothers complain of the want of books proper to be placed in the hands of their children on that day more particularly dedicated to religious

instruction; and it thence occurred to her, that a short and compendious account of the two great Sacraments, in the first place, and afterwards, of the other rites and ceremonies of our beloved and venerable Church, might be an acceptable assistant in their pious labours. The only merit to which the Compiler can lay claim is, the having selected with care the account she gives from the best authorities, a task which has been rendered more easy by the invaluable labours of Bishop Mant. Indeed, it may be thought that his work renders every other attempt of the kind unnecessary; and the Compiler would have fully acquiesced in that idea, had she not felt aware that the *unavoidable*

price of his excellent Prayer Book must prevent its being so universally circulated as it deserves to be, and also that the sight of a ponderous quarto is frequently *alarming* to the very youthful student.

The Authoress is well aware it may be objected to her, that her dialogue is extremely inartificial; and this she willingly concedes; but many doubts having arisen in her own mind as to the wisdom of uniting amusement with information of a higher nature, and as to whether those books called religious novels are calculated to do all the good proposed by their pious and well-meaning authors, she has studiously avoided, therefore, giving to her Conversations a dramatic

form, or interweaving anything like a domestic story with the instruction she was desirous of conveying. Her motive for selecting the form of dialogue was, that she thought she could bring forward the common objections so frequently urged against our excellent Liturgy, in a more easy and familiar manner, by placing them in the mouths of young persons, who might naturally appear to wish for information upon such subjects, without objecting themselves to what they are not expected to understand. And she also flatters herself, that she might thus render it more interesting to youthful readers, than by entering into long dissertations upon what they are too apt to consider dry sub-



jects. She will make no farther apologies for her little work, but humbly offer it to the Public, in the hope that the young may find some information upon the most important subjects rendered not wholly uninteresting to them; and that the pious mother may find it a useful assistant in her endeavours to inspire her children with love and admiration for our venerable Church, whose offices the more they are examined into, the more they will be found perfectly suited to the various occasions for which they are intended, and admirably calculated for the wants and wishes of all sorts and conditions of men.



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CONVERSATION I.

ON BAPTISM.

MRS. VERNON—LOUISA—MARY.

MRS. V.—My dear Louisa, you have now been for some time busily preparing yourself for that most interesting and important rite of our Church, you must know I mean Confirmation; and though my Mary must wait a year before she can share the important privilege, yet I trust, my love, you will give your utmost attention to the studies to which it is absolutely necessary for your sister now to devote herself, as she must very soon be ready to answer all the questions which Mr. Beverley will put to her;

and I own it would grieve me much if my dear girl (who gives me such satisfaction in all her other studies) should be found deficient in the only true knowledge. I am well aware that when I examine you, and ask you questions, your answers are everything I could wish; but I fear your timidity may make you hesitate when Mr. Beverley talks to you.

LOUISA.—Well, dear Mama, all I can promise is to do my best; and Mr. Beyerley's manner is so kind and encouraging, that I hope I shall not be *very* much afraid. Nothing, however, will give me so much confidence as the persuasion that I really understand the important subject; and though I have endeavoured to give my whole mind as much as possible to the Catechisms and the different explanations of them which I have learned, yet the very act of getting

them by heart makes it almost more an effort of the memory than of the understanding; and I think if you, dear Mama, would kindly explain to us the nature of the two great Sacraments, and also the rite of Confirmation, in the same manner in which you have been accustomed to instruct us in various other things, I mean by repeating to us in your own easy manner, the information you have yourself acquired by extensive reading, and allow us to interrupt you by questions when we do not clearly understand what has been said; I am sure, if you will so far indulge us, it will do us more real good than all the learning by heart in the world.

MRS. V.—My dear Louisa, did I not know that you had learned most perfectly everything I wished you to commit to memory, I should think your present proposal a little plan to escape your task.

You must not, my dear, treat too lightly the habit of learning by heart; for though I agree with you that it is too often the mere act of a parrot; yet no reflecting girl, arrived at your age, would so consider it, particularly on so awful and important a subject, as the acquirement of a proper knowledge of our holy religion. However, my love, I did not wish to distress you, for I know you spoke in mere thoughtlessness, and in order strongly to enforce your request, which I will immediately hasten to comply with, as I agree with you in thinking it may impress upon your memory the great truths you have been learning, and will also be a good preparation for my Mary's similar studies.

You will have observed, my children, that in most editions of the Book of Common Prayer, the office of the Holy Communion, or Supper of the Lord, is placed

alone, and generally between the Gospels and Epistles for the various Sundays, and the Psalms ; while the Sacrament of Baptism precedes the other rites and ceremonies of the Church, at the end of the book. Now the reason for this is, that in the earlier times of church discipline, the Holy Communion was daily administered ; and, as you well know, a part of the office is still used every Sunday. It was therefore, probably, thought more convenient to blend it, as it were, with the regular Church Service ; while Baptism, being of more rare occurrence, was placed with the other occasional services. But it will be more for our present purpose to consider the Sacrament of Baptism first, and then to proceed, by the rite of Confirmation, in the order prescribed by our Church, to entitle ourselves to approach, clothed in the wedding garment, the Table of

our Lord. Baptism, as being the first good office which can be done for us after our birth, is evidently and properly placed first in order.

The ceremony or rite of Baptism is of very ancient origin, and may be traced to very early ages of heathenism. Water, which is the matter of it, has so natural a property of cleansing, that it has been made the symbol of purification by all nations and in all ages, and used in that signification in the rites of all religions.

The heathens had various ceremonies of this nature, in order to expiate their sins; and amongst the Jews, it was the only ceremony by which they purified those heathen women who were taken in marriage by Jewish husbands. Our blessed Lord dignified the plain, easy, and well-known rite, by adopting it as the Sacrament of admission into the Christian Church. It is impossible that

any symbol can better represent that regeneration or new birth which our Saviour requires of us before we can become Christians, than the washing with water, inasmuch as it is the first office performed for us, after our natural birth. The Jews used this phrase in the same signification when they baptized their proselytes; and therefore our Lord, when he spoke of the necessity of being regenerated, or born again, to Nicodemus, was astonished that he, who "was a Master in Israel," should not understand him. I trust, my children, you perfectly understand this symbol of outward washing, to mean the purifying and renewing of our souls by the Holy Ghost; and no type of the Holy Spirit can be more proper than that of water. Fetch your Bible, my Mary, and read some texts which I will point out to you, where you will find the blessed Spirit compared to this pure element.

MARY.—I am ready, Mama.

MRS. V.—Well, then, look for the forty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, third verse.

MARY (reads).—"For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed."


MRS. V.—Now the fourth of John, part of the fourteenth verse; and seventh of John, thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth verses.

MARY (reads).—"But whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst. He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they who believed on him, should receive: for as yet the Holy Ghost was not given."

MRS. V.—As to the form of Baptism, our Saviour only instituted the essential

part of it; namely, that it should be performed by a proper minister, with water, and in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. But as to the more minute circumstances of the administration, he left them to be determined by the Apostles and the Church. There is no doubt a form of Baptism was very early agreed upon; to which the Church of Rome made many superfluous additions, but the wisdom of the reformers of the Church of England once more restored this office to a very near resemblance to the ancient model; and as we now possess it, nothing can be more beautiful or affecting.

The Prayer Book contains three offices,—the first, a public one, for healthy children; secondly, there is a short office, by which weak and delicate babes may be ingrafted into the body of Christ, in private; and the third office is for those



of riper years, who are converted from being Jews, infidels of every description, or even for any sectarian who wishes to become a member of the Church of England, and is not satisfied that he has been properly baptized. As the first of these is in the most common use, I shall principally confine myself to giving you a description of it.


LOUISA.—But, Mama, have not many people doubted of the efficacy of Infant Baptism?

MRS. V.—They have, my dear; but as *you* have ever been trained up to love and to respect all the institutions of our venerable Church, I shall not enter at large into the often-discussed subject, but merely lay before you a few of the many arguments in favour of Infant Baptism, that if at any time you should hear the doctrine attacked, you may, with humility, be able “to give a reason

of the hope that is in you." I shall first remark, that as Baptism was appointed to the same end as Circumcision, and was to supersede it, it is reasonable to suppose that it should be administered to persons of the same description; nor can we suppose that the merciful God, who graciously received the Jewish infant into the pale of his then Church at eight days old, would refuse to admit the Christian babe into his fold, as soon as its little strength enables it to be presented in the Temple. The ceremony of Baptism appears to have been in constant use amongst the Jews; female children were baptized only; the males were both baptized and circumcised. This, therefore, being their constant practice, it was not necessary for our Saviour to mention children in his commission *particularly*, it is enough that he does not except them; and when he

bids his Apostles to "go and teach all nations, baptizing them, &c.," it is a sufficient proof that he intended no alteration in the *objects* of the rite, but only to exalt the Sacrament of Baptism to a nobler purpose, and more extensive use. For as the commission is given in the fewest possible words, and with no particular direction as to what they were to do with the infants of their converts, the inference is clear that they were to pursue in that matter the same course as that which the Church to which they had belonged had been accustomed to do.

If we consult the ancient Fathers of the Church, those who lived nearest to the apostolic times, and were the best judges as to what was the practice of the very first ages of Christianity, we shall find them universally in favour of Infant Baptism. They could tell whether they



and their fathers were baptized in their infancy or not ; or whether the apostles advised the rite to be postponed till they were arrived at maturity ; and yet they all, by implication, or directly, approve of Infant Baptism. Justin Martyr affirms that baptism is to us *instead* of circumcision ; consequently, ought to be administered to the same kind of persons. Tertullian, a few years later, speaks of Infant Baptism as the general practice of his time. In the next century, Origen, in several places, expressly assures us it was the general usage of the Church ; and lastly, about the year 250, (which was but 150 years after the apostles,) St. Cyprian, with fifty-six bishops in council, unanimously declared that "*none* were to be hindered of baptism and the grace of God ; which rule," says he, "as it holds for *all*, so we think it *more espe-*

cially to be observed in reference to infants and persons newly born."

LOUISA.—Thank you, Mama. After this I think no one can doubt; as these good men, some of whom must almost have remembered the apostles, would never have ventured to maintain an opinion at variance with their known doctrine and practice.

MARY.—I agree with Louisa, that these arguments are quite sufficient to convince the understanding; but I think, dear Mama, you cannot have forgotten one other circumstance, which may be brought as an additional proof, and which cannot fail to affect the hardest heart—I mean when our blessed Lord rebuked his disciples for endeavouring to prevent children from coming to him, when he took the dear little things up in his arms, and blessed them.

MRS. V.—No, my love, I had not for-

gotten this most touching argument ; and I hope no Christian mother will ever forget this gracious condescension of the Great Shepherd of our souls, who thus tenderly received the lambs of the flock into his fold. And we may venture to conclude from this act, that he will receive all infants who are brought to him in faith, to the end of the world. His own gracious words are, "Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such are the kingdom of heaven." Since then they are capable of inheriting the kingdom of heaven, though conceived and born in sin ; this can only be, by the new and second birth of water and of the Holy Ghost, which is in other words baptism. Thus, though the ancient Church was universally agreed in admitting infants to the sacrament of baptism, yet in various parts of the Christian world they varied in the time and mode

of administering the rite. In the western Church it was administered but twice in the year; at Easter, and at Whitsuntide; at Easter, in remembrance of Christ's resurrection, of which baptism is a figure; and at Whitsuntide, in remembrance of the 3,000 souls which were baptized by the apostles at that time, as the first-fruits of the Christian Church; while in the eastern Church, the feast of the Epiphany was added to the other two, as a fit time to administer this sacrament, in memory of our Lord, who was supposed to have been baptized on that day. But about the 9th century, the times for solemn baptism were enlarged even in the Latin Church, from a sense of the propriety, or rather necessity of such a measure. The wise Reformers of our liturgy have followed the same course, and have very prudently ordered that the people should be advised to

bring their children to Church for baptism upon Sundays and holy days, and this at all periods of the year. Sundays and holy days are particularly mentioned, as a larger congregation is then assembled, who may be witnesses of the reception of these babes into the Church, and may thereby receive benefit, by refreshing their memories with a recital of those sacred engagements which they themselves formerly made.

LOUISA.—But, Mama, it is very seldom that we now hear the Sacrament of baptism administered, during the regular Church Service.

MRS. V.—No, my dear, the custom has in a great degree fallen into disuse, with many of the other wise and excellent rules and directions of the Reformers. I have occasionally met with the practice in country churches, and have always listened with peculiar pleasure to the

sublime and affecting service. However, the large size of many parishes, and the vast increase of population, pleads in very many instances a sufficient excuse for the breach of this good old custom. There is, however, another violation of the ancient discipline of our Church, which pride, fashion, and false-refinement have endeavoured to introduce, for which no *rational* apology can be made—I mean Private Baptism, or, I should rather say, Public Baptism in private houses; though really the thing itself is so contrary to the intention of the Sacrament, that I can find no term to designate it, which does not involve a contradiction. If the infant is in any danger, *before* it can be brought to Church, there is a regular office of Private Baptism, to be used in such cases, where the essential part of the Sacrament may be immediately administered; but that very service defers


the performance of the rest of the solemnity till the child can be brought to Church. But, surely, in the case of a healthy child there can be no reason why it should not be presented and dedicated to God in the house built to the honour of his name, in a reasonable time after its birth. It is to be feared that to the pride, vanity, and luxury of the parents, we must look for an answer, who think more of the pomp and splendour of the outward ceremony, than of the spiritual meaning. But such persons ought to consider, how contrary to reason and the plain design of the institution of the Sacrament this custom is. For what is the end of the sacred ordinance but to initiate the person into the Church of Christ, and to entitle him to the privileges of it? Where can the previous profession before such admission be so properly made, where the stipulation given, where the

promises to undertake the duties of Christianity, so properly uttered, as in the house of God, and in the presence of the congregation? The ordinance is certainly public: public in the nature and end of it; and therefore *surely* ought to be public in its celebration. Besides, in a private house, the very words of one of the addresses become absurd. The priest cannot with truth say to the godfathers and godmothers, "you have brought this child *hither* to be baptized," when the fact is, that *he* has been brought *there* to baptize it; and yet he has no power or authority to alter the form.

MARY.—But, Mama, in the early ages of Christianity, they did not baptize in Churches?

MRS. V.—No, my love, and for this self-evident reason, that while the faithful were under a state of persecution, there was no settled place for administer-


ing the rite of baptism ; and also, as in the warm climates of the East the Sacrament was administered by immersion, it was necessary it should be performed in a place adjacent to ponds or rivers. Thus Philip baptized the Treasurer of Queen Candace in a watery place, which they accidentally met with on the road. You must also remember, that the watchful cruelty of their enemies obliged the early Christians to perform all religious acts with as much privacy as possible. But when the blessed Dove of Peace at length hovered over the Christian Church, and men dared openly avow their devotion to God and to his Christ, as soon as churches began to be dedicated to the service of God, a *baptistry*, or place to baptize persons in, was joined to the Church, and from that time the fathers and rulers of the Church began vehemently to oppose baptism in private



houses. Justinian the younger expresses himself thus strongly, in one of his canons: "Let not baptism be celebrated in any oratory within a private house; but they who would partake of an undefiled baptism, let them go to the public churches, and there let them enjoy that gift. But if it shall be proved against any one that he has transgressed against this ordinance, if he be a clergyman, let him be deposed; and if he be a layman, let him be excommunicated." Now, my dear children, though we cannot but thank God that we were not born in times when the Church thus thundered forth threats and excommunications against any who disobeyed her commands, let us be very careful to submit with humility to the mild injunctions of our truly reformed Church.

LOUISA.—I suppose the font in time superseded the use of the baptistries.

MRS. V.—It did so. These fonts, or fountains of baptism, as they are called in old offices, at first were set at some distance from the Church, afterwards they were placed in the Church porch; and this significantly, because baptism is the entrance into the spiritual Church, as the porch is to the temple. At length, for greater convenience, they were brought within the Church; but it was not *every church* thus honoured; for some time they were confined to the city Church, where a bishop resided, which was thence called the Mother Church, because it gave spiritual birth by baptism. Finally, as population increased, all parish churches were permitted to have a font; and wheresoever they were placed, they were held in great veneration. The Rubric directs that at the time of celebration, the font shall be filled with pure water. Water is the element appointed by our



Saviour as essential ; without which the Sacrament cannot be administered ; and it ought to be *pure*, both in regard to *decency*, and to the spiritual signification of it, as appointed to wash away sin.

LOUISA.—Mama, will you now tell us something of the duties of godfathers and godmothers, as I am so soon going to release mine from any obligations they may have incurred on my account.

MRS. V.—The Rubric directs that every male child to be baptized shall have two godfathers and one godmother ; and every female child, one godfather and two godmothers. It is not exactly known how long the Church has fixed the *number* of these sureties ; but by an ordinance of Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury, in the year 1236, and in a synod held at Worcester four years afterwards, it appears that the same provision was made which our Rubric at present requires.

The custom of appointing these sureties in the Christian Church was derived, as well as the rite itself, from the Jews; and this so very early, that it is not easy to fix the time of its beginning. Some of the most ancient Fathers make allusion to the practice, which continued without scruple or interruption through successive ages; till the Anabaptists, and other puritans of late years, raised some idle clamours against it.

If we look into the history of all nations, we shall find, that whenever an infant is required to enter into any secular engagement, the laws have allowed them guardians to contract for them. For instance, if a king is crowned in his infancy, some regent, or council appointed to represent him, take the usual oaths; and guardians repeatedly enter into contracts for their minors, which contracts the minors are bound by the laws to fulfil.

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Surely this being the case in worldly matters, it cannot be thought unreasonable of the Church, to allow to infants spiritual guardians, to promise those things in their name, without which they *cannot* come to salvation.

MARY.—How do you account, Mama, for the variety of names sometimes given to these sponsors?

Mrs. V.—They are sometimes called *sureties*, because they give “*security*” to the Church that the child shall not apostatize; and they are called godfathers and godmothers, because baptism represents the new birth, and gives to the infant new and spiritual relations. It is the duty of godfathers and godmothers not only to answer for the child at the font, but to assist the parents in the great work of Christian education; and, in case of their death, to take it more particularly on themselves. They ought, therefore, to

have a watchful eye over their charge ; to embrace every opportunity of giving them good advice, and of encouraging them in well-doing. And this care ought not to cease till the children are either confirmed, or have received the Sacrament of the Supper of our Lord, and thereby, in a solemn manner, have taken upon themselves the baptismal covenant. It is most evident, that the office of sponsors of this nature is a very useful institution. For, though it is, indeed, incumbent upon all parents, both by nature and religion, to bring up their children virtuously, yet it is an excellent security to the Church, that several Christian men and women have taken it upon themselves to see that each child is properly instructed in the Christian faith ; so anxious is our excellent Church to make every provision in her power that her children shall be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the

Lord. And parents ought seriously to consider how important it is to procure proper persons for this office,—such as are truly pious ; such as have a deep sense of their duty, and are zealous for the promotion of God's glory, and the salvation of souls.


Having now, my dear girls, brought, if I may so express myself, the babe to the font, properly attended, and provided with sponsors, I will proceed to give you as summary an account of the service of baptism as the subject will admit of.

And first, the priest shall inquire whether the child, now presented, has ever been before baptized or not, lest he should unawares baptize a child, which had been previously christened, which is contrary both to the word of God, and to the ancient practice of the Church. For though several persons are recorded in Scripture as being baptized, there is no instance of

such rite being repeated; though the order is express, that the other Sacrament of our Lord's Supper is to be *often* received. As it is the initiatory rite by which we are admitted into our holy religion, it ought not to be repeated, since we can only *once* become members of that religion; and to repeat it frequently would be a manifest contempt of the apostolic doctrine, "*One Lord, one faith, one baptism.*" If the minister be answered, that the child has not been baptized, he then begins the solemnity with an exhortation to prayer; for as there is to be a mutual covenant between God and man, when we consider the vast disproportion between the parties, surely it is but reasonable, that the whole solemnity should begin with an humble address to God. The aim of our Holy Church being to make all her services reasonable, that in the words of Scripture, we may all join in her offi-

ces, “not only with the spirit, but with the understanding also;” she has been careful to put them not only into a known tongue, but also to instruct us in the nature of them; thus making her book of common prayer a sum of divinity.—“Dearly beloved, forasmuch as all men are conceived, and born in sin.” The Church here assigns the argument, why we should pray for the child. And though the doctrine of original sin has been arrogantly denied by the old Pelagians, and revived by the Socinian and Anabaptist, yet is it affirmed in Scripture, and believed both by the Jews and all orthodox Christians. Indeed, my dear girls, no one who has watched human nature from its earliest dawn, can, for a moment, doubt the truth of the doctrine; and let us all candidly look within, and then say, whether we do not see a thousand instances, in which we have acted against our con-

viction, against our reason, and against our best resolutions. And it was very necessary for the Church to lay this foundation, because the denial of original sin has always been followed by a contempt of Infant Baptism. The priest goes on to declare, that unless regenerated, the child cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven; he cannot be a member either of the Church militant or triumphant; nothing defiled can enter there; and he, alas! is defiled. But, blessed be God! a remedy is provided as extensive as the evil: water, to cleanse the outward; and the Holy Ghost to purify the inner man. We, therefore, pray that God, who hath so graciously appointed this remedy, and assured us of the necessity of it, will be pleased to vouchsafe it to the child we then present to Him. We know, that by nature, he cannot have these blessings; because, by nature, he is the child of



wrath, and the object of God's displeasure; but we pray that, by being born again of water, and of the Holy Spirit, he may be renewed, or sanctified, and made holy, by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit. I trust what I have said, my dear children, will give you a sufficiently clear idea of the purifying influence of the Sacrament of Baptism, without going more deeply into the nature of original sin, and the doctrine of regeneration, which, till your minds are more mature, I fear, might only confuse and puzzle you.

The minister then goes on to commemorate the ancient types of holy baptism, and prays that God will graciously bestow the blessings attached to it on the present infant. The first of these types is the salvation of Noah and his family in the ark, "wherein few, that is eight souls, were saved by water;" the second is the

passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, by which means, we are told, “ they were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea ;” or, in other words, by this baptism they became the disciples of Moses ; and thus it becomes a very proper type of our baptism, which makes us the disciples of Christ.

Then follows a second prayer, in which we renew our address, to express our earnestness and importunity ; we intreat, first, that the child may be pardoned and regenerated ; and, secondly, that it may be adopted and accepted by God. The congregation are then to stand up, and the minister reads to them a beautiful passage taken from the 10th chapter of St. Mark, and he afterwards comments upon it, and lest any should doubt whether Christ will accept an infant to baptism, he draws this inference, that as our blessed Lord, in the passage recorded, “ commanded the little

children to be brought to him; blamed those who would have kept them from him; took them up in his arms, and blessed them;" so he will favourably receive the present infant, and grant unto him all the blessings to be derived from the rite of baptism. This willingness on the part of God to receive us to his favour, being the overflowing of his pure mercy and goodness, and not owing to any merits of ours, it is proper it should be acknowledged in an humble manner, and, therefore, next follows a thanksgiving for our own call to the knowledge of God, of which the present occasion ought forcibly to remind us. After which, the priest addresses himself to the sponsors, and proposes to them four several questions:—1st. Whether, in the name of the child, they will renounce the devil, &c. When we enter into the covenant with God, or range ourselves under his

banners, it is necessary that we should consider all his enemies as our own; and, therefore, as children are by nature the slaves of the devil, (though as yet they have not sinned,) and are likely to be hereafter drawn to his service, by the pomp and glory of the world, and the carnal desires of the flesh, it is wise to secure them early to God; and to engage them to consider the devil and all his instruments as their enemies.

2dly. Faith is a necessary qualification for baptism, and, therefore, our Church, drawing the precedent from Philip's address to the eunuch, "if thou believest with all thy heart thou mayst be baptized," has ever since demanded of all who enter the Christian profession, "if they believe all the articles," which are implied in that profession.


3dly. It is necessary not only to believe all these articles, but the party must also

sire to be joined to the society of Christ's Church on earth. God will have no unwilling servants, and, therefore, the child is asked through his sponsors, "Whether he will be baptized in this faith?" And surely this is a question which no godfather need feel a scruple in answering in the affirmative, as no doubt, if the child could understand the inestimable privileges to which the rite admits him, and could express his wish, he would joyfully exclaim, "that is my desire."

4th and lastly. St. Paul tells us, "they that are baptized must walk in newness of life;" for which reason the child is now asked, "if he will keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of his life," that as he before promised to avoid all evil, he must now engage to do all the good in his power. In explaining to you the duties of sponsors, I trust I made you understand

the manner in which they here stand to answer for the child; but it may be as well to observe, for your better comprehension of the subject, that when an adult, or grown-up person is baptized, these questions are put to himself, and in person he enters into express and solemn covenant with God. But infants are not capable of entering into covenant in person, nor of renouncing the devil, nor of expressing belief, but all this is done for them by their sureties, who answer in their names, and enter into these covenants and engagements for them, by which means they become bound to take them upon themselves, whenever they are capable of so doing.

MARY.—But, Mama, it seems to me, that this office of sponsor is too solemn, and surely they must often undertake for more than they can perform, do you think they will be punished, if, after renouncing




the devil, &c., and promising that the child shall live a godly life, he should turn out wicked.

MRS. V.—Oh! no, my dear child, God forbid! The Church does not require of them to promise that the child shall *certainly* do and perform what they promise in his name. They only represent the child, speak in his name, and bring a solemn engagement upon him for the eternal good of his own soul. And they are bound to endeavour, by good advice, and pious instruction, to prevail on the infant, as he grows up, to act according to his Christian profession; but if, after all their care, he turns out ill, they have nothing to answer for—they have discharged the trust reposed in them; and the unfortunate child must answer for his breach of the baptismal covenant before the awful tribunal of his God.

The contract being now made, it was

the custom of the early Church to exorcise the baptized person, or to cast Satan out of him ; but as, in later times, a number of superstitious ceremonies were engrafted upon the practice, our Reformers wisely thought fit to lay it entirely aside, and to substitute instead of it four short and excellent prayers, wherein we pray, that the old Adam, which is the original pollution we derived from our first parents, may die in the child ; or, in other words, that all tendency to carnal affections, lust, pride, and vain-glory, may be destroyed ; and that the new man, or that gracious renovation which is wrought in us by the Spirit of God, through Jesus Christ, may be raised up in him ; which means, that we pray these evil fruits of Adam's fall may be rooted up by the Spirit, and that ; in their stead, may be planted spiritual affections, heavenly desires, holy purposes, and the love of God.




LOUISA.—Does the Priest consecrate the water of baptism?


Mrs. V.—The ancient Christians appear to have used a consecration prayer, by which they dedicated the baptismal water to its spiritual purpose. But the Roman Church afterwards added to it several strange and superstitious rites; such as breathing into it, making crosses over it, quenching a lighted candle in it, and mixing it with chrism, or ointment composed of various gums and balsams. Our Church, however, is content with a prayer, merely to separate the water from secular to sacred uses. The Priest, then taking the babe into his hands, shall ask the sponsors to name it. We bring one name into the world with us, the name of our parents, and which serves to remind us that we are born in sin, but a new name is given us at our baptism to remind us of our new birth; and surely

the Christian name can never be given with more propriety than at the moment when we are enlisted under the banners of Christ. We find traces of a similar custom amongst the heathens. The Romans named their children on the day of their lustration, (that is, when they were washed from their natural pollution,) which was therefore called "*Dies Nominalis*." And the Greeks soon after the birth of their children carried them round about a fire, which was their mode of dedicating them to their gods, and they were accustomed to give them their names on that occasion. That the Jews named their children at the time of circumcision, we may collect both from the Old and New Testament.

LOUISA.—I see by the rubric, that if the babe is healthy, the Priest is required to dip him into the water, but surely that is now never done?



MRS. V.—No, the custom has been entirely laid aside; and in this cold country, the tender bodies of new-born infants would seldom bear exposure without clothing, even in a damp church, without the additional risk of being dipt into cold water. Our church has therefore kindly left a discretionary power in the hands of her ministers. There is no doubt but that our blessed Lord himself, and the primitive Christians, received the rite of baptism by immersion; and certainly the putting of the baptized person under the water, and his coming up from it again, is a very lively type and figure of his dying and being buried to sin, and of his rising again unto newness of life. However, affusion, or sprinkling with water, is not without its signification also, and answers to the covering or throwing of earth upon a deceased person. We have also reason to suppose, that the primitive



Christians considered affusion as sufficient, when immersion could not conveniently be obtained. And it appears probable that St. Paul baptized the jailor, Silas, and his family, in this manner, for as the rite was performed in haste, and in the night, it does not seem likely that there would be a sufficient quantity of water at hand in which to immerse them. The priest shall then baptize the infant "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." As this form of baptism was given by our blessed Lord himself, the Catholic Church, in all ages, has been very careful not to deviate materially from it. He then proceeds to receive him into the bosom of the Church, and to sign him with the sign of the Cross. This ceremony has given great offence from time to time to many persons, who have considered it a relic and remnant of Popery, but the entire sense

of our Church is against the supposition that she attaches any superstitious value to the Cross itself. Her own words testify that she uses it merely as a sign or token, that the future servant of Christ is pledged or sealed not to be ashamed of the banner under which he is enrolled. The sign is placed upon his forehead, the seat of shame, to prove that he shall not hereafter blush, or be ashamed to stand up in defence of the Cross of Christ; and the idea is taken from the seventh chapter of the Revelations, where the angel is said to seal the servants of God on their foreheads. My remarks upon this interesting sacrament have already, my dear children, led me so much beyond the limits I had at first proposed to myself, that I cannot now pursue this subject any farther, but if you wish for more information, you will find it fully treated of in the thirtieth canon of our Church.

MARY.—Where can I find the canons, Mama?


MRS. V.—They are bound up at the end of the second volume of the cheap edition of the Homilies, published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. The babe being now baptized, after a thanksgiving for the same, we proceed to the Lord's Prayer; and as it was given by our Saviour to his disciples as a badge of their belonging to him, it can never be more proper or reasonable to use it than now, when a new member or disciple is admitted into his Church. In the primitive Church, catechumens were not allowed to use this prayer, till they were become the sons of God by regeneration in the waters of baptism. For which reason it is sometimes called by ancient writers, "the Prayer of the Regenerate." We then again offer up hearty thanks to God for the blessings

bestowed on the child now grafted into Christ's fold, but as we do not believe him to be so regenerate, but that by sloth and wilful iniquity, he may forfeit the privileges he has received, we earnestly and humbly pray that this child may love and serve as one, upon whom such great favours have been bestowed. Then follows a most excellent address to the godfathers and godmothers; and it is earnestly to be desired that sponsors would seriously consider this most pious exhortation; and take due care to practise it in every particular: considering what account they can give to God if they neglect a duty which they have promised in his sacred temple to perform. The address concludes with a desire that the child may be brought to the bishop to be confirmed, as soon as he can say the creed, &c. in the vulgar tongue, which you no doubt understand to mean

the mother-tongue, or language in common use. And now, my dear girls, I think I must have fatigued your attention.

LOUISA.—Oh no, dear, kind Mama, we are very, very much obliged to you, and only fear you are yourself fatigued. Beautiful and affecting as I have always thought the Baptismal Service, I now long more than ever to hear it again, as I shall now better understand the reasons for the different parts of the service, and shall be able to admire the striking manner in which one part follows, or grows, as it were, out of the preceding.

Mrs. V.—There is, indeed, an admirable harmony and design in every part of the Liturgy of our Church, so that it may with truth be called the “Beauty of Holiness. But, my dear girls, I must now leave you, as I have letters to write.



MARY.—May I first repeat a little poem I learnt the other day, on this very subject of baptism, without, of course, foreseeing how soon my attention was to be so forcibly turned to it.

MRS. V.—You may, my love.

THE POEM.

Where is it mothers learn their love?—

In every Church a fountain springs,

O'er which th' eternal Dove

Hovers on softest wings.

What sparkles in that lucid flood

Is water, by gross mortals ey'd:

But seen by faith, 'tis blood

Out of a dear friend's side.

A few calm words of faith and prayer,

A few bright drops of holy dew,

Shall work a wonder there

Earth's charmers never knew.

Blest eyes, that see the smiling gleam
Upon the slumbering features glow,
When the life-giving stream
Touches the tender brow !

Or when the holy Cross is sign'd,
And the young soldier duly sworn,
With true and fearless mind
To serve the virgin-born.

But happiest ye, who, seal'd and blest,
Back to your arms your treasure take,
With Jesus' mark impress'd,
To nurse for Jesus' sake.

Sweet one, make haste, and know Him too,
Thine own adopting Father love,
That, like thine earliest dew,
Thy dying sweets may prove.

CONVERSATION II.

ON CONFIRMATION.

LOUISA.—Dear Mama, will you now be good enough to explain to us the nature of confirmation, as it is a subject which naturally interests me particularly.

MRS. V.—My dear, you should rather have asked for a commentary upon the forms of the rite of confirmation, which is what I had in view when I described to you the sacrament of baptism, for with its nature, or spiritual meaning, I trust you are already acquainted, by means of the various explanations you have been studying.

LOUISA.—This is indeed, Mama, what

I meant to ask for, though I did not express myself properly; but Mary and I have both been so interested in the explanation you have given us of the rubrics relating to baptism, and the parallel customs of other nations, that you cannot, dear Mama, oblige us more than by giving us a similar account of the rite of confirmation.

Mrs. V.—And I cannot be more agreeably employed than in giving my dear girls any useful information, and it adds greatly to my gratification, if I can also render it interesting to them.

When children are well instructed in the vows made for them in baptism, by the Church Catechism, it is then required that they should take them upon themselves, and be confirmed by the bishop. As this holy rite was not appointed by Christ himself, it cannot properly be called a sacrament; but there is no doubt

that the Apostles, as soon as they began to exercise their ministry, were accustomed to lay their hands upon such persons as had been previously baptized by an inferior minister. The primitive Church imitated this custom in enjoining the bishops to lay their hands, with holy prayers, on persons who have been baptized; which was believed to convey the Holy Spirit to them, to enable them to fulfil their vows. This holy rite is still retained in the Eastern and Western Churches; and our office or form for this ceremony is most excellent. It begins with a serious admonition to all that come to it, and a solemn engagement from the parties themselves to keep their vow. Secondly, follows the rite itself, which consists in the laying on of the hands of the bishop, and his benediction; lastly, the office concludes with prayers and a final blessing. In the

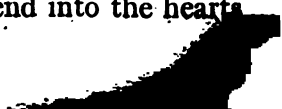
early ages of the Church, the bishop's benediction was preceded by the ceremonies of unction, or anointing with chrism, which, as I before explained to you, was a consecrated oil prepared for the purpose, with many costly ingredients. But this ceremony being merely a human institution, and being grossly abused in the superstitious ages, was not adopted into our Reformed Church. They had another ceremony, called consignation, or signing the forehead with the Cross, which was considered as the "Seal of the Spirit." But our Reformers were content to retain the most solemn and essential part of the ceremony, and, in fact, the only part for which they have the warranty of Scripture, viz. the laying on of hands. This ceremony is of very great antiquity, having been used by the patriarchs on very many occasions; thus Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph, and

Moses thus pronounced his benediction upon Joshua. In fact the Jews practised it in all benedictions, and upon various occasions. But to render it more solemn, the Christian Church has restricted the custom to a few very peculiar circumstances, such as conferring orders, and administering confirmation.

LOUISA.—I understand you to say, Mama, that we derive this ceremony of confirmation, from the circumstance of the Apostles laying hands on their converts, but I remember that ceremony was then generally followed by some miraculous gifts to the persons so confirmed; now as miracles have ceased, why is it necessary to retain the form, which conferred the power to perform them?

MRS. V.—It is true that in the beginning of Christianity this rite was frequently followed by miraculous powers, and it was necessary it should be so, in

the infancy of the Church, as some visible effect upon those who believed was essential, in order to convert others to the faith. But these extraordinary effects did not always attend even those upon whom the Apostles laid their hands; "all did not speak with tongues," "all did not work miracles;" and yet we are led to suppose that *all* were confirmed. The great aim of the Apostles in administering this rite was, that their converts might be endued with such aid from the Holy Ghost, as to enable them to conquer all their spiritual enemies. When whole nations became Christians, the necessity for miracles ceased, but the Christian world had still enemies to contend with, and diseases to cure, so formidable, that though the Holy Spirit withdrew his extraordinary or supernatural assistance, He was graciously pleased, by means of this holy rite, to descend into the hearts



of his faithful servants, and to enable them to cast out the devil of lust, of pride, of passion; to beat down Satan under their feet; to heal the leprosy of sin; to open their eyes to the wondrous things of his law; and to preserve them from the infection of bad example, and all the dangers of a wicked world. In a word, in baptism we are enlisted under the banner of Christ, marked as his soldier, and sworn to be faithful; but confirmation equips us for the battle, and furnishes us with arms to withstand the enemy.

MARY.—Does the Church fix any particular age, at which people should come to be confirmed?

MRS. V.—Not precisely. At the end of the office for baptism, the sponsors are desired to present the child, who has then been baptized, for confirmation, as soon as he can say the Creed, the Lord's

Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the other parts of the Church Catechism. And in the preface to the rite of confirmation, it is farther required, that he shall be come to years of discretion; a period which must differ extremely in various persons. The practice of the Church also, in different ages, has been extremely various. In the primitive Church, all persons who were baptized in presence of a bishop were immediately presented to him for confirmation, infants as well as adults. There can be no doubt of this fact, as it is well attested by ancient writers, and may also be inferred from the well-known custom of administering the holy Eucharist, or sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to infants, which presupposes their confirmation. Tertullian frequently alludes to this practice; another writer of great authority directs mothers to bring their infants with them


to the Eucharist; and as at one period of the Romish Church it was necessary to receive the holy elements fasting, they are enjoined not even to give their natural food to their babes until they should have received the Eucharist, unless there was an urgent necessity for so doing. In England, in the thirteenth century, children were confirmed before they were five years old; from an idea that they were then without guile, and that there was nothing to impede the descent of the Holy Ghost. After this period, the Western Church in general began to discourage the practice of this very early confirmation, and for this judicious reason, that as children were now to take upon themselves the vows made for them in baptism, it was very desirable they should be of an age to understand the true nature and meaning of those vows. Our Reformers, therefore, who

they abolished various unmeaning ceremonies, which had been added to this simple and imposing rite, desired that no child should be presented till arrived at years of *discretion*, and though, as I before remarked, this circumstance must vary with the capacity of the person, common consent seems to have fixt the period at about fourteen years of age. The practice of catechising or instructing children in the principles of religion may be regarded as ordained by God himself, and certainly authorized by the example of our blessed Lord, who is supposed by Grotius to have been following a well-known custom of the Jews, when he remained behind his parents in the Temple, and subjected himself to an examination by the Elders and Doctors of the Law. Josephus tells us that the Jews were particularly careful in having their children all instructed in the Law

of Moses; to which end they had in every village a person called an Instructor of babes, (to which St. Paul seems to allude in the second chapter of Romans, where he speaks of "an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes.") It was the duty of this person to instruct children in the law, till they were ten years old; after which in the Talmud, till fifteen, when they were to be publicly examined in the house of God, and if approved, were then declared to be children of "the Precept," i. e. they were from that time obliged to keep the law, and became answerable for their own sins.

MARY.—Pray, Mama, what was the Talmud, in which you say the young Jews were instructed?

Mrs. V.—The Talmud is a collection of Jewish traditions, consisting of two parts, the Mishna, or text, and the Gemara, or commentary upon the latter.



part, which was added many years afterwards, is said to be coarsely written, and filled with many absurdities; but the Mishna is composed in a superior style, and is useful to the learned in explaining passages in the Bible, which relate to similar customs, and are written in similar phraseology.

LOUISA.—I believe no one but a bishop has a right to confirm?

MRS. V.—You are right, my dear, in your supposition. Our Rubric ordains, that the minister who is to confer this rite must be a bishop. And this command is derived from the apostolic days; for, though in various parts of the Acts, we meet with instances of baptism being administered, and even miracles performed, by the inferior ministers, yet we find one, or more, of the apostles going afterwards for the purpose of laying hands upon, or confirming those, who had been

previously baptized, that they might, through their prayers, receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost. In the early ages of the Romish Church, when the Pope assumed despotic sway over the other churches of Christendom, he reserved to himself the sole right of composing the sacred oil, or chrism, which was then used as an essential part of the ceremony; and this privilege greatly increased the revenues of his see. The composition was commonly made on the Thursday in Passion week, and was a decoction of nearly forty costly drugs, seeds, and plants, mixed with oil and wine; this composition was then put into small round bottles or boxes, and were called alibasters, in allusion to the box of alibaster which Mary broke, and with which she anointed the feet of Jesus. Some idea of the *value* to the Pope of this article of *commerce* (if I may so call it) may be formed, from the circumstance of

one of these small bottles selling for the sum of 200 crowns. In a later period of Church history, the privilege of making this ointment was granted to bishops, and to them only; and, though the Reformers of the Church of England abolished the useless custom of Chrismation, as it was called, they reserved to the bishops the sole right of laying on of hands, and of confirming the youth of Christ's flock in those solemn engagements which they then take upon themselves.

We will now proceed to consider the various parts of this short, but highly impressive and beautiful service. "Upon the day appointed, all who are then to be confirmed, being placed in order before the bishop, he (or some other minister appointed by him) shall read the preface following." The Church of England is so far from esteeming ignorance to be the mother of devotion, that she employs every

possible method to make each of her offices properly understood. The present, like most of her other forms, begins with a simple and impressive preface, clearly setting forth the nature of the duties the young persons are now to take upon themselves.

LOUISA.—Excuse my interrupting you just now, Mamma, but I before forgot to tell you, that yesterday, when Mary and I called upon poor old Mrs. Evans, she said she thought she should go and be confirmed again, when the bishop comes here. I did not like to advise her not to do so, for fear of misleading her, but I determined to tell you of her intention.

MRS. V.—Poor old woman ! I will call upon her, and endeavour to make her understand, that as she has been already confirmed, and has even received the Sacrament, she must not repeat the rite of confirmation. She means well, but is

very ignorant. I have frequently heard of such persons, who go to be confirmed whenever they have an opportunity, from an idea that the bishop's blessing does them good. You, my dear girls, are well aware, that this sacred engagement to lead a Christian life is to be taken once for all; the venerable Archbishop Secker says, "you should no more think of being confirmed a second time, than of being baptized a second time." After the preface, the bishop solemnly asks if, in the presence of God and of the congregation, the young persons now before him will renew the solemn vow and promise made for them in baptism by their sponsors, to which every one shall answer I do. My dearest Louisa, the time is now so near, when you, my child, are to pronounce these most important words, that the heart of your mother is, indeed, overflowing with anxiety. And, though

your time and thoughts have long been devoted to the subject, yet I must beg your attention, while I give you a short summary of the important duties to which those two little words, "I do," so solemnly bind you. You, my child, are just entering a world of temptations, with no experience, and little knowledge of that world to guard you. The authority of others over you is beginning to lessen; your own passions to increase. Your intercourse with others less innocent than yourself must become more frequent, and we know *who* has said, "that evil communications will corrupt good manners!" I am not aware of any more effectual manner in which your fond mother can guard your youthful steps from wandering in the paths of error, than by reminding you, that you are now to form deliberate resolutions of avoiding temptation, and of acting right; and that you are to

declare these resolutions in the presence of God, of his most exalted ministers, and of a large congregation of youthful witnesses, assembled with more than ordinary solemnity for that very purpose.

LOUISA.—Oh! dearest Mama, pray for me, that I may never break these sacred vows; and, above all things, I trust, that I shall never be deprived of the blessing of having your advice to fly to in every difficulty.

MRS. V.—My most earnest prayers, my child, are continually ascending to the Father of Mercies for you and all my other treasures; and my best advice will be ever at your service; but my Louisa must learn to look higher than to any earthly wisdom for aid in all difficulties and dangers. If you do not earnestly strive to perform your own duty, my child, vain will be the attempt of any other person to keep you in the right way.

You are now about to become the guardian of your own conduct, let me advise you, then, to examine the nature of the vow you are about to take, and ask yourself whether you can conscientiously enter into the engagement. Remember, if you make the answer, which is directed, without sincerity, you lie to God; if, without attention, it is trifling with Him. Watch over your heart, therefore, and let it go along with your lips. The words "*I do*" are soon said, but much is comprehended in them. When you use them, my child, remember that in effect you say, "I do heartily renounce all the unlawful temptations of the devil, and all sinful indulgences of the flesh. I do sincerely believe, and will constantly profess, all the articles of the Christian faith. I do firmly resolve to keep all God's commandments; to fear and love Him, to pray to Him and praise Him daily in pri-

vate; and to be constant in my attendance on public worship. To endeavour to prepare myself to attend frequently His holy table; and, above all, to submit with pious resignation to all His dispensations; to set Him ever before mine eyes, and to acknowledge Him in all my ways. I do farther resolve, with regard to my fellow-creatures, “to do justly, to love mercy,” to speak truth; to be diligent and useful in my station, dutiful to my superiors, kind to my inferiors, courteous to my equals. With regard to my personal duties, I do resolve to be modest, temperate, chaste, pious, humble, mild, contented; to restrain all my wishes within due bounds, to discourage too fond an attachment to this world, and to cultivate a habit of thinking much of the life to come. Lastly, I do resolve, whenever I fail in any of these duties, as I fear I too often shall, to betake myself in

stantly, with penitence and prayer, to the Throne of Mercy ; plead the merits of my Saviour ; beg for the promised assistance of the Holy Spirit ; and, in His strength, not my own, strive against my faults, and watch over my future conduct with redoubled attention.

LOUISA.—I will endeavour to keep this little paraphrase of my vow in mind, at the awful moment when I pronounce it.

MRS. V.—Do so, my child, and may Almighty God enable you to keep all your good resolutions. Observe that religion does not call you to gloom and melancholy. She does not require from you extreme austerity, nor abstinence from the safe and innocent enjoyment of those pleasures suited to your age and station. She demands no extravagant flights and raptures ; no unmeaning and unedifying forms and ceremonies ; but it is to a life

of fervent and rational devotion to God, and of cheerful usefulness to man, that you bind yourself, when you utter the awfully important words, “ *I do*,” pronounce them, then, with seriousness, and keep them with fidelity.

In the next part of the office, after the persons have confirmed and ratified the vow of their baptism, prayers are offered up, that God would confirm and strengthen them in their good purposes and resolutions. Scripture teaches us, and sad experience proves, that of ourselves we can do nothing ; that “ we are not sufficient of ourselves to help ourselves ;” but the same Scripture goes on to tell us *where* our sufficiency is to be found ; and that “ God will give His Holy Spirit to them that ask.”

Under the Jewish dispensation, the family of Aaron was set apart to bless the people in the name of the Lord, we need

not, therefore, wonder to read in the Gospel, that the apostles went down to Samaria, to pray that the newly baptized converts might receive the Holy Ghost. Therefore it is, that at the periods appointed for confirmation, a number of young disciples, prepared to run one common race, to encounter the same temptations, meet together, to pray for themselves and for each other. Therefore it is, that a number of elder Christians, who have already experienced the dangers of life, assemble to pray for those who are just entering upon their course. And for this reason it is, that the ministers of God purposely come to intercede with Him in their behalf; and surely we may hope that their united supplications will prevail, and prove effectual. After these joint supplications, which are sometimes called versicles, the bishop proceeds to collect their petitions into a continued


form; in which he prays that the persons now to be confirmed may be wise and fearful, (meaning possessed with godly fear,) prudent and courageous; discreet in their choice, devout in their duties, and pious in their lives. The form of this prayer appears to have been taken from an old Greek office, and was called the Prayer for the Seven Graces of the Holy Spirit. Probably, because in the book of Revelations, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are called "The Seven Spirits;" and in ancient writers we read of the sevenfold graces of the Spirit; however, the separate meaning of each of the Seven is neither easy nor useful to determine with certainty.

The preparatory part of the office being now finished, and the persons all kneeling in order before the bishop, he shall proceed to lay his hand upon the head of every one severally. I have already told you that this is one of the oldest ce-

remonies in the world, when God's blessing was desired upon any one. Our Lord himself sanctioned the practice by his own example; for we read, that when children were brought to receive his blessing, he conferred it by laying his hands upon them. So essential did St. Paul consider this part of the ceremony, that he calls the whole office of confirmation "the laying on of hands,"—a name which it retained for several generations amongst the Fathers of the Latin Church. And we can scarcely conceive on what plea it has, in later times, been discontinued in the Church of Rome. They have substituted rather a singular custom in its stead, that of giving the person to be confirmed, a slight *blow* on the cheek, to remind him for the future, he must be ready to endure any insult or indignity for the name of Christ. But while they discontinue the practice of

imposition of hands, they seem to acknowledge its efficacy, by pretending that custom is sufficiently complied with, in the use made of the hands during the ceremonies of chrismation; or anointing various parts of the body; and of consignation, or signing the forehead with the cross.


Our wise and pious Reformers rationally abolished all these fanciful, and, at least, useless ceremonies, and restored the apostolic and ancient use of laying on of hands. Now, though this ceremony is a token that the bishop acts by divine authority, yet, at the same time, they pray to Heaven for the blessing they bestow, in humble acknowledgement, that the precious gifts here bestowed are not the effect of their own power and holiness, but of the abundant mercy and favour of Him, who is the only fountain of all goodness and grace. The words of the bishop's



prayer are simple, pious, and rational ; there is no petition for any extraordinary gifts or impulses of the Holy Spirit ; but that he may so influence the hearts of these young persons, that they may continue to grow in grace as they increase in years, till they come to His everlasting kingdom. Thus, my child, you must not expect to perceive any sudden and sensible change in your heart, giving you all at once a remarkable strength to resist temptation, or comfort and fervency in your devotions, such as you never felt before ; but if you go through the whole of this sacred office with proper dispositions, you may cheerfully hope that the bishop's prayer will be accepted, and may reasonably promise yourself such an abundant measure of the divine assistance, as will be necessary for your rescue in all extraordinary dangers, and for your comfort,

support, and gradual increase in every virtue of a Christian life.

The imposition of hands being over, the bishop and congregation, after mutually recommending each other to God, now begin those united and public devotions which are admirably suited to the solemnity. The first of these is the Lord's Prayer, without which no form of devotion can be perfect, and particularly seasonable at this time; after which the bishop offers up a beautiful collect, in which he prays, that what he has just done may not be an empty and insignificant sign. There is in this prayer a noble mixture of faith and humility, worthy the purest ages of the Church. Depending upon the promises of God, he knows that the graces of his Holy Spirit will follow upon the act he has just been performing; but as he also knows these gifts and graces to be the fruits of prayer,



he makes his humble supplication that the hand and Spirit of God may continue with the confirmed ; the one, to assist them to understand the Divine Will ; the other, to help them in the performance of it, till they come to everlasting happiness. The word of God shows us the way to Heaven ; the Spirit enables us to walk in that way ; so that, if God graciously hears this prayer, these youthful disciples can scarcely miss this blessed consummation of all our hopes.

It was formerly believed that confirmation was a preservative of the body as well as of the soul ; and no doubt we may look to this belief as the origin of that custom among the lower orders, to which I have before alluded, of going frequently to be confirmed. However, in consequence of this belief, another collect was added at the Restoration, in

which we pray that God would direct, sanctify, and govern, both our souls and bodies, in the ways of His laws, and in the works of His commandments.

All necessary requests and prayers being now offered, it remains, that the bishop dismiss the assembled youthful flock with a solemn blessing, which will doubtless abide with them, unless by sloth, negligence, or wilful sin, they deprive themselves of the benefit.

My children, I have now given you all the information which occurs to me at present respecting this most interesting ceremony; but I cannot dismiss you without a few more *last words* of advice to my Louisa, and I shall avail myself in a great degree of the pious "Advice to Young Persons preparing for Confirmation, of Archbishop Secker." He advises, above all, to "avoid the very beginning of any known sin, as if it once be-

come habitual, neither baptism, nor confirmation, nor the prayers of the bishop, of the Church, nor of the whole world, will do you any service. On the contrary, every thing which you might have been the better for, if you had made a good use of it, you will be the worse for, if you have made a bad one. You do well to renew the covenant of your baptism in confirmation; but if you break it, you forfeit the benefit of it. You will do well to repeat your vows at the Table of the Lord; it is what I fervently hope and trust you will soon do, ‘for the strengthening and refreshing of your soul;’ but if, after being admitted to this holy privilege, you live in the practice of any known sin, you do but eat and drink your own condemnation.” I, however, hope better things of my Louisa—the promise of her infant years encourage me to hope that I shall never experience the heartfelt agony of

seeing my darling commit gross and wilful sins; but what we, perhaps, too lightly accustom ourselves to call smaller faults you cannot escape. Faults of temper, waste of time, sins of omission, emotions of vanity and fancy; these, my child, are the besetting sins of your sex, age, and station; and these you must assiduously guard against. Confess them in your daily prayers, strive faithfully against them; and remember that, as continued health is preferable to frequent recovery from sickness, so is innocence to the truest repentance. If we suffer ourselves to transgress our duty, how can we be sure that God will give us *time* to repent? at all events, we shall have lost, irreparably lost, the time we have been receding in the path of duty; when, God knows, we ought to have been pushing forward towards the goal with all possible diligence. While, therefore, my child, you

are innocent of all wilful sin, preserve the treasure with the greatest circumspection; enter upon the path of righteousness with the utmost diligence, and persevere in it to the end. Remember that your vows to God are upon you, that it will be in vain for you to forget what He will assuredly remember, nor safe to neglect what He expects you to do. My child, be ever diligent on your part, in the work of your calling, and He will infallibly give you all necessary assistance, and “confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless unto the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

LOUISA.—My dear Mama, I cannot thank you, as I ought, but I trust my future life will prove me not wholly unworthy of the kindest and best of mothers.

MRS. V.—God bless you, my dear girl! We are both too much affected to

prolong this conversation with comfort to either party. Go now with your sister; while I endeavour, in solitude and prayer, to calm the too anxious throbbing of a mother's heart.

CONVERSATION III.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

MRS. VERNON.—Come here, my beloved Louisa, and let me add a mother's fond and tender blessing to that which the bishop this day pronounced upon your head. You have now, my child, taken upon yourself the vows of a Christian, and have entered into covenant with your God. May God the Father protect you; may God the Son plead for you; and may God the Holy Ghost so support and strengthen you in the arduous path of duty, that the hearts of your parents may rejoice in seeing their dear child a

well-instructed, pious, and humble Christian.

LOUISA.—Oh! dearest Mama! my heart is too full! I cannot express my deep sense of all your tenderness and affection; and I feel, at this moment, so diffident of my own conduct, and am so impressed with the awful responsibility I have this day taken upon myself, that I dare not make any professions, but I humbly hope that God will bless me for your dear sake, and so enable me to perform my duty, that I may never give pain to the best of mothers.


Mrs. V.—My sweet child, no frame of mind can be more proper than the one you have just described, for we know that “God giveth grace to the humble;” and to obtain this grace, you must at all times cultivate a spirit of pure, fervent, and constant devotion. And as we know that there is *one rite*, to the pious per-

formance of which the Almighty seems to have attached a peculiar measure of this grace, it is my earnest hope to entitle my dear child to this blessed privilege, by presenting her, on Sunday next, at the Altar of her God and Saviour, with all that holy joy and pious thankfulness which parents only can feel.

LOUISA.—Am I indeed to be so highly honoured? Then, Mama, you do not think me too young?

MRS. V.—Oh no, my child; greatly do those persons mistake the nature of this rite, if they attempt to deter the young from approaching the Table of the Lord. If they argue that youth being exposed to strong temptation is more likely to commit sin, let them remember on the other hand, that it is therefore more in need of the powerful aid of divine grace, which this holy sacrament is intended to convey. I here present

you, my love, with two works, the first of which is called, *An Earnest Exhortation to a frequent Reception of the Holy Sacrament, by a Layman, and being particularly addressed to young persons*, you will find this argument treated in the most clear and admirable manner; this valuable little tract has, I believe, brought more persons to comply with the last commands of a dying Saviour, than any thing ever before written on the subject. This other book is called, *the New Devout Communicant*, by the Rev. James Ford, a clergyman at Ipswich. The devotions intended as a previous preparation, as well as those to be used during the celebration of the sacrament, are most excellent; they are pious, rational, and scriptural, without coldness on the one hand, or enthusiasm on the other; and this valuable little manual is preceded by an excellent account of the



nature and end of this most holy and important rite of our religion. Read it with attention, my child, and offer up the prayers with fervent, pious, and faithful devotion, and I am then persuaded my dear girl will find herself in a proper frame of mind to ratify at the altar those vows which she has this day taken upon herself.

LOUISA.—My dear Mama's directions shall be strictly attended to.


MRS. V.—And having now, my dear, directed your attention to two admirable works, which will give you the best possible account of the spiritual meaning of this most blessed sacrament, and the duty incumbent upon you, as a Christian, to partake of it, with a description of the manner in which it was instituted by our Lord himself, I will proceed, in a similar manner, to the course I pursued with regard to the Sacrament of Baptism, and

give you some account of the form in which the Church of England celebrates this rite, and how she differs from other churches in very important particulars.

MARY.—I quite long for this account, as I am sure it must be very interesting.

Mrs. V.—In looking into different authorities upon this subject, I found so much of an important and interesting nature, that the difficulty with me has been to select what was most essential, and to pass slightly over the rest, or this subject would far exceed the limits within which I must restrict myself.

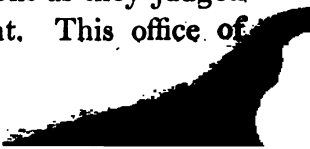
Since the death of our blessed Lord has reconciled God with man, and his intercession alone procures for us all the good things we enjoy, we are commanded to make all our prayers in his name; and as the receiving the holy Eucharist has ever been considered as the most acceptable mode of acknowledging his merito-



rious passion, it was the custom in the best and purest ages of the Church, to celebrate this rite as a part of the daily service. To follow, as nearly as she is able, this example, the Church of England enjoins a considerable part of this office to be blended with the ordinary church service on Sundays and holy days, and orders the priest to say it at the altar, as the proper place at which to commemorate Jesus, our only Mediator. The New Testament has not prescribed any particular form to be used at the celebration of the Holy Communion; therefore, when the extraordinary spirit of prophecy failed, the rulers of the Church supplied its absence by forms of their own composition. And as every bishop had a right to prescribe the form to be used in his own diocese, these forms necessarily varied considerably.

There are copies still extant of litur-

gies ascribed to St. Peter, St. James, and St. Mark, though these, no doubt, have been considerably mangled and interpolated; but it was from these liturgies that Osmond, the Norman, who was Bishop of Salisbury in the time of William the Conqueror, compiled the famous liturgy of Sarum or Salisbury, from some of the customs which I mentioned to you when conversing on baptism; but this missal of Sarum became, in its turn, much altered and corrupted, between the death of Osmond and the era of the Reformation. However, the Reformers of the Church of England still found so much to approve in it, that they adopted it as their model, rather than the missal of the Church of Rome, reserving to themselves the right of rejecting what appeared less proper, and making such additions and transpositions as they judged necessary or expedient. This office of



the holy Communion may be divided into four parts.

1st. The more general preparation; which is that part used by the whole congregation on every Sunday or holy day.

2dly. The more immediate and special preparation; or that part of the office which precedes the consecration of the elements.

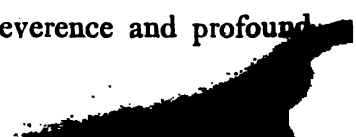
3dly. The celebration itself; or the consecration and administration of the elements.

4thly. The post communion, as it is called; or the prayers and thanksgivings to be offered up, when the elements have been received.

I shall, my children, give you a very brief account of the first part, as it can scarcely be considered as a part of the sacrament, properly so called.

We begin this holy office with the

Lord's Prayer, which the primitive Church always used; and nothing can be more proper than that we should offer up the prayer taught by our blessed Lord, when we are about to celebrate the institution which he enjoined. Next follows a collect for purity, admirably suited, either as introductory to the communion, when that is to be celebrated, or as preparatory to the rehearsal of the Ten Commandments. Before the original publication of the law from Mount Sinai, the Jewish people were commanded to purify themselves, and therefore before we listen to a repetition of these commands, our Church has piously enjoined us to pray that our hearts may be purified by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Commandments are then read, which we should remember are the words of God himself, and should listen to them with the most awful reverence and profound



humility. We are next presented with two collects for the king, either of which may be used at the discretion of the minister. We thus pray in obedience to the injunction of the Apostle, that "intercession should be made for kings and all persons in authority;" and these collects are supposed to be placed after the Commandments, because the king is the guardian of both the tables of the law, of religion, and of morals.

MARY.—Which of the two collects do you like best, Mama?

MRS. V.—They are both fine prayers, but I certainly prefer the first; because it enjoins the *respective* duties of kings and people, and prays not only that God will enable the king to perform *his* duty, but also that he will teach the people to honour and obey their king; while the second relates solely to those duties which are due from the king to his people.

The next part of the service, as you well know, is a collect with certain portions of Scripture, called an Epistle and Gospel, selected for every Sunday and holy day in the year. These collects are all of them most beautiful forms of devotion; and the portions of Scripture are well chosen, and generally contain some of the most instructive parts of the Epistles; and the Gospel generally presents us with some remarkable parable or miracle of our blessed Lord. To go into any thing like that particular examination which they so well deserve, would lead me too far from my present purpose, as would also any explanation of that beautiful summary of the Christian faith called the Nicene Creed, which immediately follows the reading of the Gospel. And nothing can be finer, than to hear a large congregation burst forth into this noble confession of their belief of that Saviour,

whose gracious words or merciful works they have just heard recited.

MARY.—Why is this form called the Nicene Creed?

MRS. V.—It was so called because composed at Nice, in Bythynia. For 300 years after the death of our blessed Lord, as you may well believe, my children, no member of his Church on earth ever for one moment dared to breathe a doubt of his divinity; but about the year 320, Arrius, a discontented priest of Alexandria, either did imbibe a different doctrine, or for the sake of acquiring popularity, by availing himself of the love of mankind for novelty, presumed to teach that Christ was not a divine person; but though superior to human nature, was not a partaker in the Supreme Godhead. This dangerous doctrine raised great alarm in the Church, upon which the Emperor Constantine called a council

at Nice in 325, where three hundred bishops assembled, and unanimously condemned the doctrine of Arrius, and framed that creed, which takes its name from the place where it was composed.

LOUISA.—Mama, I wish to ask you why many people, both in this creed and the one in the first part of the Morning Service, turn round to the altar when they repeat them, if they happen to be situated with their backs to it in church?

MRS. V.—It is, my love, a very ancient custom, and as it is intended to do honour to the glorious Sun of Righteousness, who arose in the east, ought not to be censured as superstitious ; at the same time, as it is no where particularly enjoined in Scripture, the omission is not to be deemed irreverent or negligent. It was the custom of the Jews, during their dispersion or absence from Jerusalem, when they prayed, to direct their eyes

toward the holy city, which contained the sacred ark and the mercy seat; and the primitive Christians always addressed their prayers towards the east, as the quarter of the heavens from which they expected the “day-spring from on high, the bright and Morning Star”—even our blessed Lord, to re-appear. For this reason our churches are generally built from east to west, and the altar placed at the east end. So that, my dear girls, you feel no doubt that it may animate the faith and fervour of the pious Christian, to think that he is worshipping the God of his fathers in the same manner as did the saints and good men of old.

There was once a singular custom in Poland and Lithuania, which is probably now discontinued; at this part of the creed, when the name of Jesus was pronounced, for all the nobles to turn to the altar and draw their swords, in token that

they were ready to fight to the last extremity for their faith.

After this creed has been repeated, the sermon follows, and the minister blesses the people,—when, I grieve to say, a very large portion of the congregation generally leave the church; and the little flock of the faithful who remain prepare themselves for a pious reception of the holy mysteries. And now begins the second part of the office, or that special preparation which precedes the consecration of the elements. The minister returns to the Lord's Table, and when all things are ready commences with reading some of the sentences which are selected for the purpose of exciting in the hearers a spirit of charity; for, during their recital, proper persons are employed in collecting the alms of the congregation. This part of the office is called the Offertory, because it is now that the offering

are made. This custom is certainly apostolical, for St. Paul enjoins that "on the first day of the week, let every one lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." Our blessed Lord himself gave alms at the Passover, and seems to expect that the altar should always be approached with a gift. This custom continued to succeeding ages, as appears by the writings of the ancient Fathers, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and others. But in these primitive times the offerings were not always in money, but consisted of bread, wine, corn, &c. These offerings were so considerable, that after providing a due supply for the celebration of the Sacrament, the remainder was divided into four parts; one for the relief of the poor; the second was the bishop's revenue; the third was appropriated to repairing and beautifying the church; and the fourth was for the maintenance of

the clergy. When the alms and charitable donations of the congregation have been properly collected, they are brought to the officiating minister, who receives them with reverence, and places them for the present upon the altar, in token that we dedicate all that we do for our brethren first to God, and that we fulfil this duty in obedience to his commands. And as our second way of expressing our charity is by prayer, we now address to him our supplications for all mankind; because, though our own means of relieving our fellow creatures must be extremely limited, yet can the Father of Mercies succour and support all mankind; and as many may stand in need of our prayers, who do not require our alms, we proceed to offer up a prayer for Christ's Church Militant here on earth.

MARY.—What is the meaning of that expression, *Mama*?

MRS. V.—The Church of Christ, my love,—that is, the whole number of the faithful,—is generally divided into two parts ; the Church Triumphant, and the Church Militant ; by the latter we mean a state of warfare, or those Christians who are still alive, and who are maintaining a continued struggle against the great enemies of their faith—the world, the flesh, and the devil ; and whose life is thus a constant warfare under the banners of their Saviour. By the Church Triumphant we mean those Christians who have departed this life, after having fought the good fight, and who are now enjoying the reward of the victories they have obtained over their spiritual foes. Alms and oblations give efficacy to prayer,—they are the wings on which it mounts to heaven ; and in this prayer for the suffering Church of Christ, we show that our charity extends where our alms

cannot reach: we commend all mankind to *Him* who is alone able to save all who come to him with faith. In the latter part of this prayer, the whole of which is very ancient, our wise Reformers have changed those prayers for the dead, which are to be found in the Roman missals, into a thanksgiving to God, for those who have departed in his faith and fear, and a supplication that we may be enabled to follow their good example.

LOUISA.—Do the Roman Catholics pray for those who are actually dead?

MRS. V.—They do, my love, in total opposition (as it appears to us) to various texts of Scripture, amongst which are the following:—"As the tree falls, so must it be:" "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave,

whither thou goest:" "Behold the night cometh when no man can work:" with many others. This prayer concludes with entreating our Heavenly Father to "grant our petitions for Jesus Christ's sake, our only Mediator and Advocate." I should not have taken notice of this very usual ending to our prayers, but to point out how materially it differs from the Romish Mass, from which we derive it. This Mass introduces the blessed Virgin, and other saints whose intercession they supplicate, even at the very moment when they are about to celebrate the all-sufficient and meritorious death of the one great and only Mediator.

MARY.—Mama, I did not like to interrupt you before, but will you tell me what is the meaning of oblations?

MRS. V.—The word "oblation" means a sacrifice, and in this prayer relates to the offering of the bread and wine,

which are then placed upon the table, in order to be consecrated, that they may serve as lively emblems of the one great sacrifice,—even the body and blood of our blessed Lord.

In all the large editions of the Prayer Book, we are now presented with two exhortations, one of which is to be used at the discretion of the minister, on the preceding Sunday, or holy day, when he announces that the Holy Sacrament is to be celebrated.

MARY.—Which is generally used ?


MRS. V.—In general, the minister only reads the first sentence of the first exhortation ; which merely declares his intention of preparing the sacred feast for all those who shall be religiously and devoutly disposed to partake of it. The second he is enjoined to read, where he sees his flock in general neglectful of this great duty. And certainly nothing can be conceived more pious and rational,

more persuasive and convincing than this invitation. In it, we are courteously invited, and earnestly pressed to come; our scruples are satisfied; our excuses proved to be vain; our duty is made evident; and our peril in neglecting it most forcibly set before us. The time for the actual celebration being now come, the Rubric enjoins that, the communicants being conveniently placed, the priest shall address to them another beautiful form of exhortation. In the first copies of the Prayer Book, in the time of Edward VI., it is farther enjoined that the men shall kneel on the one side of the choir, and the women on the other—a custom still retained in some of the more remote country parishes.

The minister in most affectionate terms now addresses to the flock this gracious invitation; he exhorts them to examine whether they are in a fit frame of mind

to partake of the heavenly feast, and sets before them the blessings to be derived from a worthy participation of it. By our being "one with Christ, and Christ with us," is meant, that in a spiritual sense we shall be more and more closely united to our Saviour, even as the members of the body are united to the head; and that we do from him receive those spiritual influences and gracious assistances, by which our souls are invigorated and refreshed. So essential was this heavenly food considered to the health of the soul, by the Fathers of the Apostolic age, that Ignatius calls the Eucharist "the medicine of immortality; a preservative that we should not die, but live for ever, in Jesus Christ." The Apostle, on the other hand, points out the danger of an unworthy reception.

LOUISA.—Is not this the passage, Mama, which alarms so many persons,




and deters them from receiving the Sacrament?

Mrs. V.—It is, my love, and as the expression of *damnation* has been so much misunderstood, it is to be desired that it had been translated (as the same word is in many other places) judgment or condemnation, for it means no more; and this even relates merely to punishment in this life, as the Apostle *expressly* says, that the soul may be spared in the final judgment. This may be collected from the whole of the context; and, indeed, if we read the whole passage, we shall see that the unworthy reception with which St. Paul reproaches the Corinthians *cannot* be applicable to Christians of the present day. As I have before told you, the primitive Christians made this Sacrament a part of their daily service, but the Corinthians appear to have confounded this heavenly feast with their

common meals, and "not discerning the Lord's body," presumed to be guilty of great excesses. But as we now approach the Table of the Lord with humble reverence, and under circumstances which render any sort of excess totally impossible, it is much to be regretted that ignorant, or weak-minded persons, should have "*wrested* this, with other directions" of this great Apostle, to the injury of their souls, when his admonitions were solely intended for the particular people to whom they were addressed.

The feast being now ready, and the guests prepared with due instructions, the priest, who is the steward of these mysteries, invites them to "draw nigh with faith;" and that God may accept them, he mentions the graces with which they should be adorned; which are, repentance, charity, and holy purposes. That they may possess the first requisite,




he invites them to a humble confession of their sins, meekly kneeling upon their knees. This surely is the posture which best becomes offenders, when suing for pardon to the King of Kings. The form of confession here prepared for us is perhaps as perfect as any thing of human composition can be ; and though so general in its terms as to suit all mankind, yet it is so particular, that each individual feels it comes home to his own bosom. We have, indeed, *all* “provoked Almighty God, by thought, word, and deed ;” and we may *all* declare that the “burden of these sins is intolerable to us ;” while in the same breath that we ask for pardon, we may all, the very best of us, petition that God will be pleased to amend our lives for the sake of his dear Son. This form of confession was composed by the Reformers ; the Absolution which follows is very ancient, and

is supposed to have been composed by a Pope, 730 years after Christ, and is to be found in most of the old Missals, both of the Romish, and of other Churches. It is now used by the priest with the kindest intention of inviting us to approach the Holy Table, which the previous confession of our unworthiness might deter us from doing; he now, therefore, pronounces, by the authority committed to him, this absolution, which is also a benedictory prayer, and is modelled from God's benediction in the 6th chapter of Numbers.

MARY.—I often observe, Mama, that in the Morning Service, the lips of many people move after the clergyman when he is pronouncing the absolution, surely this cannot be right?

MRS. V.—It is extremely wrong, and can only proceed from ignorance, or negligence, and I fear too often from the



latter cause, as you may observe the practice in some who, at least, *ought* not to plead ignorance. This shows the wisdom of the Apostle's advice, to pray with the *understanding* as well as with the *spirit*, for surely no one who exerted his understanding, would usurp this privilege which is granted to *priests* alone; and thus *liberally* bestow *their* absolution upon themselves and their neighbours. These mistakes are (as an admirable writer on the Liturgy calls them) "spots on our feasts of charity," too visible to be passed over without just reprehension:

It is so desirable that the minds of those who are to approach the Holy Table should be comforted, and their faith and hope strengthened, that the Church now presents us with four most "*comfortable*" texts from Scripture, which contain the very promises upon which the foregoing absolution was founded. And if these

sentences are read with deliberate piety, and attended to with humble trust, they cannot fail to soothe the most timid, heal the broken hearted, and disperse the darkest clouds of doubt and of despair. Having now exercised our charity, repentance and faith, we next proceed to the duty of thanksgiving, which is so material a part of this sacred office as to have given a name to the whole, the Eucharist meaning "a sacrifice of praise." We begin with lauds, as they are called, or anthems, which are purely primitive, and nearly as old as Christianity itself, being found in the Liturgies of St. James, Chrysostom, Basil, &c., and the one used on every Sunday, when the Sacrament is administered, is most sublime and beautiful. There are particular prefaces intended for the great Festivals of the Church, which very beautifully and expressively return our fervent thanks for

the especial blessing it commemorates, when the whole congregation break forth into this heavenly hymn, wherein we call upon the choir of angels and archangels to bear a part, and to join with us, in ascribing all honour, glory, and love, unto the high and undivided Trinity. This hymn is called the Trisagion, or thrice holy ; because this epithet is thrice repeated, and mentally applied to the three glorious persons in the Godhead. And cold indeed must be the heart, that does not burn within the bosom when it finds itself thus privileged to bear a part in those sublime words which have been uttered by saints and martyrs upon earth, which Isaiah heard the Cherubim and Seraphim pronouncing before the throne of God, and which St. John, when rapt in prophetic vision, learned would be the celestial melody of the armies of heaven to all eternity.

Having been thus elevated as it were to heaven, we must remember, my children, that, as yet, we are but dust, and, therefore, lest we should be too much exalted, the minister now offers up, in his name and ours, a contrite confession of unworthiness; and the humble and devout Christian can no where find a form more expressive of the feelings of his heart at this moment; he, therefore, willingly joins in this prayer to the Father of all mankind, to have compassion on his infirmities, to relieve his necessities, and to fulfil his desires.

Then follows the Consecration Prayer, when the minister is to prepare the sacred elements for their spiritual signification; and here we see the superiority of our own Church, which pretends to no mystery or miracle. The Romish priest pretends that he is working a miracle in converting the elements into the actual

body of our Lord, and, therefore, stands so completely in front of the table that the congregation cannot see what he is doing ; and in the Greek Church, for the same reason, they shut the chancel door, or draw a curtain before it. But as our Church pretends to no miracle, nor wishes to shroud her offices, either by concealment, or even by the veil of an unknown tongue, from her children, she enjoins that the priest “ shall so order the bread and wine, that he may with the more readiness and decency break the bread, and take the cup into his hands before the people ;” and as we do not, or OUGHT not, to eat our common food, without begging a blessing upon it ; how much more then ought we to consecrate this blessed food of bread and wine, which Christ designed to set forth as the emblems to commemorate his death ! My children, it is not my intention to enter

into any thing like controversy, or while I am endeavouring to instil into your tender minds a love and veneration for the forms of that Church under whose government I consider it one of your highest privileges to have been born; I do not wish, I repeat, to make any harsh observations with regard to those who worship the God of their fathers under different forms than our own. It is one of the blessings for which I daily thank my God, that I was born a member of the Church of England, and early taught to love and venerate all her institutions, and it is only with a view to excite a similar feeling in you, my dear girls, that I am now about to present you with a slight sketch of those opinions in other Churches, which I consider less admirable than our own. And very slight will the sketch be, for I am not qualified, either by information or inclination, to e

into any deep investigation connected with a difference in religious opinions.

The form of consecration in the primitive Christian Church was a repetition of the history of the institution, together with prayer to God, that he would sanctify the elements of bread and wine by his Holy Spirit, and make them to become the body and blood of Christ, by altering *not* their nature and substance, but their qualities and power ; and by exalting them from the simple elements of bread and wine, to become types and symbols of the body and blood of Christ, and efficacious instruments of conveying to worthy receivers all the benefits of his death and passion. This doctrine is so plain, so rational, and so consistent with the whole Scriptural account of the transaction, that we can scarcely conceive how the strange and incomprehensible doctrine of transubstantiation ever

came to be engrafted upon it. Indeed, my children, the whole of this doctrine is so mysterious in itself, and so difficult to be understood, that I almost despair of being able to give you a clear account of it. The Roman Catholic then, believes, that after consecration Jesus Christ, God, and man, is truly and substantially contained under the outward appearance of bread and wine, which substances, as being then the actual body of the Lord, are worthy of adoration, and they affect to triumph over the Protestant, because his notion of the Sacrament, say they, cannot be supported without having recourse to figure and metaphor. The following passage is a canon of that Council which established transubstantiation, and is thus translated by a zealous Roman Catholic: "If any man shall say, that in the blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist the substance of the bread and wine re-

mains along with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and shall deny that wonderful and singular conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood, the *appearances* of the bread and wine *only* remaining, which conversion the Catholic Church calls transubstantiation, let him be anathema." Let us, my dear children, thankfully congratulate each other that the wisdom and piety of our Reformers have rescued our Church from the trammels of a doctrine so repugnant to a sound and rational faith, and that they have restored this prayer of consecration to the best of all patterns, viz. that given us by the blessed Author of the institution himself.

The first marginal direction in the prayer, as it now stands, is, that the priest shall take the paten into his hand.

MARY.—What is a paten, Maina?

Mrs. V.—The paten is the plate on which the bread is laid. The original word, *patena*, signifying a broad open plate. In the early ages of Christianity, when the worshippers of our Lord did not abound in worldly riches, the sacramental bread was frequently laid on a plate formed of twisted osiers, or wood. About 200 years after the death of Christ, plates formed of glass began to be used; but it does not appear to be sooner than the ninth century, that the Church was wealthy enough to substitute gold and silver vessels for the use of the altar. The cup which contains the sacramental wine is called the chalice, and in the lives of some of the early Popes frequent mention is made of the greater and smaller chalice; in the former the wine was consecrated, and in the latter, which were thence called ministerial cups, the

wine was administered to the people ; another proof that the withholding the wine from the laity is an innovation of recent date. These chalices were at first, like the paten, made of wood, afterwards of glass, and, lastly of more costly materials. The chalice was probably composed of glass in the time of St. Athanasius, as his enemies accuse him of having broken one in a fit of passion. It appears that our present custom of breaking the bread into small pieces, was the practice of the earliest Church ; and is surely more in accordance with our Saviour's own act, and more significant of his body being broken for us, than the Roman Catholic mode of delivering an entire wafer to each communicant. The priest is then, in a similar manner, to take the cup into his hands, and declare unto the people how it is consecrated to the mystical washing away of sin.

The Rubric then enjoins that he shall, himself, receive it in both kinds, and then proceed to deliver the elements, first to any clergymen who are present, and then to the congregation in general. This last direction, I believe, is understood to relate only to such clergymen as are present in an official capacity, and not meant to include any private clergyman who may form one of the general congregation. The form of words used at delivering the sacred elements, by the steward of God's mysteries, consists of three particulars ; 1st. Of instruction, declaring that they are about to receive the body and blood of Christ ; 2dly. Prayer, desiring that this reception of them, "may preserve the body and soul unto everlasting life ;" and, 3dly. a direction as to what we are to do, "to take, eat," or "drink this," in remembrance of Christ's death, and to lift up our hearts with pious gratitude for all

the benefits which that death has conferred upon us. The first part of these sentences is very ancient, the rest is added by our Church, and the whole is an excellent paraphrase upon our Lord's own words at the original institution. The Rubric orders that the minister shall deliver the bread into the hand of the communicant, for which practice we have the concurrent testimony of the ancient writers; but after the doctrine of transubstantiation had been received by the Church, the priest put the wafer into the mouth of the communicant, lest any part of the body of Christ should be wasted or lost, and for fear any part of the blood should be spilt, the cup was entirely withheld from the laity. The people are enjoined to receive these sacred elements kneeling, and surely no posture can be too humble when we are to receive a pardon, which is to deliver us from death

eternal. The members of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland receive sitting, and are apt to reproach us with idolatry, and a retaining of Romish superstitions, for kneeling; but it is curious to remark that the only person in the Christian world who receives the elements in that posture, beside themselves, is the Pope himself. It has also been supposed that the first person who introduced the custom of sitting at the holy feast into the Church, was Arrius, who, as I have told you, first denied the divinity of our blessed Lord, and thought it "no robbery to be equal with Christ," and to sit at his table. And surely no one who firmly trusts in the divine nature of his only Saviour would take for his example this enemy of his faith. When each person has communicated he should return to his seat, that he may not prevent the approach of others to the altar, and may there employ


his time in devout prayer and meditation; assistance for these exercises, he will find in many excellent publications intended for that purpose. When all have communicated, the priest is directed to cover what may remain of the sacred elements with a white linen cloth, supposed by the ancient writers to be an imitation of the act of Joseph of Arimathea. For which reason it is called by Latin authors corporal, because it was wrapt round the body of Christ; and there is an order of Eusebius, in the year 300, that this covering "should not be made of silk, purple, or dyed cloth, but of fine white linen, like that in which our Lord was buried."

We are now arrived at that part of the service which is called the Post Communion.

Our Saviour concluded this sacred feast with prayers and hymns, and it is

most fit therefore that the Church should follow his example ; and we very properly begin these devotions with the words of Him “ who has given power to as many as receive him, to become the sons of God :” for which reason we may presume, upon good grounds, to call God our Father, and to address to him the prayer which his blessed Son has taught us.

Then follows the sacrifice of the holy Eucharist, or the offering up of the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, which the priest now addresses to Heaven in the name of all present, entreating God to accept the offering or sacrifice of ourselves, our souls and bodies, to his service. The meaning of which is, that as he no longer requires the sacrifice of bulls and of goats, as under the law, so we now offer to him a more acceptable sacrifice ; and after pleading the merits



of the one great sacrifice which we have just commemorated, we next presume to dedicate all the faculties of our souls, and all the powers of our bodies, to obey his commandments, and to do his will.

For the help of devotion, the Church presents us with another form, which may be used at discretion, and which is also a very beautiful thanksgiving prayer.

Then follows that beautiful and angelical hymn, part of which angels sung at the birth of Christ, and which we very properly humbly imitate when we celebrate the completion of those inestimable blessings which his birth was intended to convey to the sons of men. The first part of it is of heavenly origin, the latter part is ascribed to Telesphorus, about the year 139, and the whole hymn, with very slight alteration, is to be found in the very oldest forms of devotion now

extant, and is frequently mentioned by Chrysostom as a part of the communion service. We are told that our Lord himself and his apostles sung an hymn before they went out after the feast of the Passover; and when our hearts are warmed with fervent gratitude for all the benefits we have just had forcibly brought before our memory, we can find no words better calculated to express the feelings with which our souls are overflowing. We may say of this divine hymn, what Bishop Horne tells us the ancient Hebrews remarked of the 145th psalm, that "*He* could not fail to be a child of the world to come, who would repeat this psalm three times every day." After this hymn, the priest, or bishop, if he is present, is directed to dismiss the people with a blessing, which benediction is peculiarly the province of the minister highest in dignity present, according to

the apostle's injunction, "the less is blessed of the greater,"—which blessing should be listened to with reverence by the people, who are by no means to repeat it after him, as I am sorry to say too many do, from the same ignorance or inattention to which I alluded when we were speaking of the absolution. This solemn and affectionate form of dismissal is taken principally from Holy Writ ; and the minister of Christ, in pronouncing it, prays that the "peace of God," which can alone make us happy here, and bless us hereafter, "may keep our hearts and minds," our judgments and affections, "in the knowledge and love of God ;" and that every blessing of the Holy Trinity may be distributed amongst us, and remain with us always.

I think, my dear girls, I have now said enough to give you a general idea of this most sublime and important service,

for though the following collects, which may be used or not, at the discretion of the minister, are admirable,—they are, I think, most frequently introduced before and after the sermon,—and in this way you are well acquainted with them; and the concluding rubrics are more fitted as directions to the clergy, than to the congregation in general. Do you think you understand the nature of this holy rite?

LOUISA.—I trust I do, dear Mama, and when I have carefully studied these other works which you have given me, I humbly hope I may accompany dear Papa and you to the altar on Sunday next, not entirely ignorant of the duties I shall then more firmly pledge myself to perform.

MRS. V.—God bless you, my dear child, and enable you to keep all your good resolutions.

CONVERSATION IV.

ON THE FORM OF SOLEMNIZATION OF MATRIMONY.

MRS. VERNON—LOUISA—MARY.

LOUISA.—What a very interesting service is the form of matrimony! I am not sure that I ever read it before, and certainly never heard it performed, till at my cousin's wedding to-day. May I ask you, dear Mama, to give us an account of its institution and forms, in the same manner as you have already described to us the Sacraments and rite of Confirmation?

MRS. V.—Willingly.

That the holy state of matrimony was instituted by God, is evident from the

two first chapters of the Bible. Whence it came to pass, that among all the descendants of our first parents, (the numerous inhabitants of the different nations of the world,) there has been some religious way of entering into that state, in consequence and testimony of its being a divine institution. Both in the Greek and Latin churches, offices were drawn up in the earliest times for the religious celebration of this holy ordinance; but being afterwards mixed with many superstitious rites, our Reformers thought fit to lay them aside, and to draw up a plainer and graver form, and one more agreeable to the usage of the primitive Church. Mankind is naturally inclined to society, and the bond of all society is marriage,—that dear and holy tie, which includes within itself all the charities of life.

MARY.—What you have just said,

Mama, reminds me of a passage in Milton, which I read to you lately,—may I repeat it?

MRS. V.—Certainly.

MARY (reads).—

“Hail! wedded love! mysterious law, true
source

Of human offspring! sole propriety

In Paradise of all things common else!

By thee, adultrous lust was driv’n from men,

Among the bestial herd to range; by thee,

Founded in reason, loyal, just, and pure

Relations dear, and all the charities

Of father, son, and brother first were known.”

MRS. V.—Marriage for this reason ought to be made sacred and adopted into religion, because it is the interest of mankind to pronounce it inviolable. Wherefore our Church appoints that none but a lawful minister shall tie these bonds; for God himself married the first man and woman, and every similar cove-

nant is made to him, and the minister is God's representative to take their securities, and to bless the parties in God's name. 2dly, Our Church allows no clandestine marriages, for she orders that the bans, or decree of matrimony, shall be published on three successive Sundays before the marriage be celebrated. 3dly, For still better security against clandestine marriage, the Church orders that the ceremony shall take place in the day time ; for those who intend honestly and honourably need not shun the light. In some ancient offices it is desired that the bridegroom and bride should be fasting when they made this religious vow in God's presence ; and some of the old canons also set apart various seasons of the year as improper for marriage. These customs are now abolished. 4thly, That this holy rite may be still more solemn it is expressly required that the marriage be

celebrated in the church, the place of God's special presence, before whom they make this religious covenant; and the sacredness of the place, it is hoped, will make the parties more careful in observing it. And for the better assurance of this, it is enjoined to be done in the presence of their friends and neighbours, who ought to be there to testify their consent, and to join with the priest in prayers for a blessing on the union. For this end our Church has provided a most proper, pious, and judicious form; consisting, 1st, Of the preparation or instruction of the whole congregation, and the charging of the parties to declare all known impediments. 2dly, The solemnization, by asking their mutual consent, joining their hands, plighting their troth to each other, cementing it by the pledge of a ring, the priest's pronouncing his benediction over the parties. 3dly, The con-

clusion of the office, by praises in the psalms, by prayers in the collects, and finally, by instructing them in their duty out of the Word of God. Having given you, my children, this short summary of the office of matrimony, I will proceed to comment upon the different parts of it more at large.

LOUISA.—Mama, will you tell me first what is the exact meaning of the word bans? I always thought a ban meant rather an interdict.

MRS. V.—It has been frequently used in that sense, but the word ban, I find, upon looking into the subject, (for I do not profess to understand any of the ancient languages,) is derived from a barbarous Latin word, *bannum*, *bandum*, or from *bannire*, and may signify any kind of edict or proclamation. It came into use about the seventh or eighth century, when the Latin tongue was vitiated by

an admixture with various barbarous nations of the North, such as the Gothic, Teutonic, and Gaulic languages. Before any person can be lawfully married, it is necessary that the bans, or declaration that it is their desire to be so united, should be published in the church for three successive Sundays, and in the presence of the whole congregation, at the end of the second lesson in the morning service. There is, however, a provision made, that bans may be published in the evening service when it is not the custom of the parish to have the service in a morning.

MARY.—Is this ever the case, Mama?

MRS. V.—It is in some country parishes, where perhaps the same minister has to serve several churches in the same day.

This care of the Church to prevent clandestine marriages is as old as Christi-

anity itself. For Tertullian tells us, that in his time all marriages were considered clandestine and unholy which were not published before-hand in the church; and by several ancient constitutions of our own Church, the very plan we now pursue, of declaring the bans on three following Sundays, or holy days, was enjoined.

MARY.—But it is only poor people who are now-a-days married by bans.

MRS. V.—It has become customary for persons of a higher order to be married by license, as it is called, or by special permission from the Archbishops, who can grant these licenses in their respective provinces; but this equally prevents clandestine marriage, as a license cannot be obtained unless the parents consent, or the parties declare themselves upon oath to be of age. It makes no change in the office of administration of matri-

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mony ; and any circumstance which would impede or retard the ceremony after the bans had been thrice published, would operate equally for suspending compliance with a license if similar reasons occurred. In England marriage may now be celebrated at all seasons of the year, and upon any day ; but it can only be performed at a particular time of the day, between the hours of eight and twelve in the forenoon, which is an additional provision against clandestine marriage.

MARY.—But, Mama, I have often seen in the newspaper accounts of marriages performed in private houses, and in the evening.


MRS. V.—Yes, this is not an unfrequent custom amongst the very highest ranks of society ; and is rendered lawful by a special license, as it is called, granted by the Archbishop of Canterbury alone, by

which he can authorize parties to marry in any place, and at any hour.

LOUISA.—I am surprised that any one should wish to avail themselves of such a permission, for certainly the very feeling that you are in the house dedicated to the honour of God, and the idea that you are pronouncing your vows at His altar, must inevitably enhance the awe and solemnity one should wish to experience at so important an act of one's life.

MRS. V.—I quite agree with you, my dear child; nor is this the only instance in which fashion leads her votaries to act in opposition to the good old customs of our fore-fathers.

No impediment having been previously declared, the rubric directs that on the day appointed, the persons to be married shall come with their friends and neighbours into the body of the church. It was formerly the custom for the couple



who were to be united to be placed at the church door, where the priest used to join their hands, and perform the greatest part of the matrimonial service. There, by the ancient law of the realm, the espousals were made, and the man endowed the woman with the portion or settlement which he had before assigned to her, and which was thence called "the dower at the church door." This custom is alluded to by one of our oldest poets, Chaucer, whose works, though not fit for the perusal of young persons, contain much curious information concerning the manners and habits of our fore-fathers : speaking of one of his characters, called the Wife of Bath, he says :

"She was a worthy woman all her live,
Husbands at the *church-dore* had she had five."

The Greek Church prescribes that the
"bridegroom and bride shall come into

the temple, and there stand before the sacred doors." But when our Church was reformed the Rubric was altered, and the whole ceremony ordered to be performed within the church, that it might be the more conveniently witnessed by the congregation. The parties are to be attended by their friends and neighbours, who ought to attend on the solemnity to witness and to pray for blessings on it. It is not improbable but the friends here mentioned may mean such as the ancients used to call paranympths, or bridesmen: some traces of which custom we may find to be as old as the days of Samson, whose wife is said to have been given to his companion, which companion is called, in the Septuagint version, by a Greek word signifying bridesman. And that bridesmen were in use among the Jews in our Saviour's time is clear from several passages of Scripture, particularly

the 29th verse of the 3rd chapter of St. John —“ He that hath the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice.” From the Jews therefore the custom was derived by the Christians, and at one period of Church history, it was considered a necessary part of the sacred solemnity. Our Church however neither recommends nor forbids it, but leaves it, as it is in fact, as a matter of indifference. And I, my children, have only dwelt upon it, as it is amusing to trace the customs of different people and other times than our own. The remaining part of the Rubric concerns the position of the parties, whom it orders to stand, “the man on the right hand, and the woman on the left.” In an old office called the Salisbury Manual it is thus worded, “the woman shall stand

on the left hand of the man ;” for which it gives this quaint and fanciful reason, that the first woman, Eve, was taken out of the left side of Adam. The true reason probably is, that the right hand being the place of honour, it was assigned to the man, to denote that he is the superior or head of his wife ; it has thus been considered amongst all Christian churches ; but amongst the Jews the woman is placed on the right side of her husband, in allusion to that expression in the 45th Psalm, “ On thy right hand shall stand the queen,” &c. which has always been considered, in its primary sense, as an epithalamium on the marriage of Solomon with the daughter of Pharaoh, though its splendid sublimity plainly indicates that it soars far above any earthly union, but must be a prophecy of the eternal marriage of Christ and his Church, and which it is the highest honour of all

earthly marriages to typify or shadow forth.

In order to check all light and foolish mirth, which thoughtless and inconsiderate persons are sometimes inclined to indulge in, even on the most solemn occasions, the office begins with a grave and awful preface, which represents the action we are about to be of so divine an origin and of so high a nature, that those persons must be most weak, silly and devoid of shame, who cannot lay aside their levity on so serious an occasion. It tells us that our blessed Lord himself condescended to adorn and beautify this holy estate by his presence, and we may infer, that innocent festivity at proper seasons is not unbecoming the character of a good Christian, since Christ himself was pleased to honour a wedding with his company, and even performed a miracle that the harmless cheerfulness of the

guests should not fail for want of a necessary supply of wine. The venerable and eloquent Bishop Hall thus remarks upon this subject,—“The first public miracle of the Saviour of the world graceth a marriage. It is an ancient and laudable institution, that the rites of matrimony should not want a solemn celebration. When are feasts in season, if not at this main change in our state, wherein the joy of obtaining meets with the hope of further comforts? *He* that made the first marriage in Paradise, bestows his first miracle on a Galilean marriage. How honourable must be that state of wedlock, when the Son of God thus pleases to honour it! Happy is that wedding where Christ is a guest!”

The Minister having asked the congregation if they are aware of any impediment why the contracting parties should not be united, turns to the parties them-

selves, and in the most solemn manner charges them to declare if they know of any reason why the marriage should not proceed, on the penalty of living together in perpetual sin. And here we cannot but admire the wisdom and piety of our Church, in the especial care she has taken to prevent unlawful and unholy marriages of every kind ; not only by a variety of previous forms, but at length at the very altar by this most awful and solemn charge ; and surely that conscience must be utterly seared which could hear unmoved those tremendous words, if it were aware of any just cause which would render the union unlawful. No impediment being alleged, we proceed to the marriage, the first part of which was called the Spousalia, or Espousals, and frequently preceded the marriage by some days, and had its distinct and peculiar ceremonies. But in

our office both forms are united. The Priest first asks the mutual consent of the parties, as the friends of Rebecca asked her consent, before they sent her away to Isaac. The man, therefore, is asked whether he will have the woman to his wedded wife; and the woman whether she will have the man to her wedded husband; and that they may better know the conditions of the covenant they are about to enter into, the Minister enumerates their respective duties. The man is, in the first place, "to love his wife;" and it is mentioned first, because if he has this affection it will render all his other duties easy, it being no severe task to perform good offices to those we love. Secondly, he must "comfort her," which is what St. Paul means by "cherishing," and implies, that he must support and comfort his wife under all the infirmities and sorrows to which the delicacy and

tenderness of her sex render her particularly liable. Thirdly, he is "to honour her;" for though she is pronounced by Scripture to be the "weaker vessel," yet she is not to be despised for those unavoidable weaknesses which God has been pleased to annex to her formation, but rather respected for her usefulness to man. Fourthly, he must keep her in sickness and in health, or afford her every necessary and comfort consistent with his station, in all conditions. Lastly, he must consent to "leave all others, and be faithful to her alone;" and this caution is added to prevent those dreadful scourges of society, adultery, polygamy, and divorce. As there is no difference in the duties of man and wife, so are the terms of the covenant the same, except that the woman is to promise to obey and serve her husband. Nor is this a difference of man's devising, but is ex-

pressly ordered by God himself, who in every passage of Scripture, where he enjoins the man to love his wife, also commands the wife to be obedient and subject to her husband ; and it is clear that the comfort and good order of society depends in a great measure on the rule. Their duties now being laid before the parties, if they feel that they can conscientiously undertake them, they are to answer "*I will.*" And never can these words be uttered on a more solemn occasion than the present, for if either party now draw back, after having repeated them, they will have many witnesses of the falshood, even God and his angels, as well as the minister and congregation ; therefore let them be pronounced with all possible gravity, and for ever observed with all possible sincerity.

The minister now asks, " who giveth this woman to be married to this man ?"

the antiquity of which custom is evident from the frequent phrase in Scripture of "giving a daughter to wife." The foundation of the practice seems to be a care of the female sex, which is always supposed to be under the protection of a father or guardian. It is also suited to the modesty of the sex, by showing that the woman does not *seek* a husband, but is given to one by her parents and friends. This idea is no doubt derived from the nuptial rites of the Romans, in which the bride was to be taken by a kind of violence from her mother's arms; and when she came to her husband's house, she was not to appear to cross the threshold willingly, but was to be carried over by force. There is, however, a deeper and more sacred meaning, and one more suited to a Christian people, which is, that the woman is to be given by her father, not direct to the bridegroom, but


to the minister, in token that the father resigns her up to God, and that it is God who by his priest now gives her in marriage; that as the Almighty provided Adam with a wife, he in like manner confers the same blessing on his servants to the end of time. Then follows the joining of hands, which is a very ancient ceremony, and has been used in all ages of the world in contracting friendships, and confirming covenants of every kind. Among the Persians and Assyrians marriage was thus contracted; it was also in use among the Jews, and was from them adopted into the Christian church. Several variations crept in with other superstitions of Romanism, which are only worthy of remark as matter of curiosity; for, as Dr. Johnson sensibly remarks, "concerning superstitious ceremonies, it is vain to conjecture, for what reason did not dictate, reason cannot account for."

Of this nature is a command in the Manual of Salisbury, to which I have before alluded, "that if the bride had not been married before, she should have her glove off; but if a widow, it must be kept on." The hands being united, the parties are to repeat after the minister that beautiful vow, which is for ever to bind them together in all circumstances and in all situations.

LOUISA.—Ah, yes! dear Mama, after the ceremony was over, my cousin told me, the words of the vow so exactly described her feelings, that it would have been impossible to have found words more expressive of what she wished to say.

MRS. V.—They do indeed most fully express the sentiments which two persons really and properly attached to each other must feel, at the moment when they are dedicating their future lives to promote

their mutual happiness; and viewed in every light, as a mutual stipulation, it is most explicit and full: it comprehends whatever is essential to any contract, and what adds to its beauty and excellence is its plainness and simplicity. The sense is so clear that it cannot be mistaken by the most common capacity, or most uneducated person: and though some have objected to the quaint and obsolete terms in which it concludes, I own I am one of those who think the very antiquity of the phrase adds to the solemnity of it, as being the very same in which our ancestors have been accustomed to exchange their vows. The old English expression, to give, to plight, or to pledge troth or truth, is equivalent to the Latin "*fidem dare*," which is adopted in the ancient canon law, and signifies to promise faithfully. But besides the invisible pledge of fidelity, the man is directed to deliver



a visible pledge, which the Rubric directs shall be a ring, which he is to place upon the fourth finger of her left hand. For the retention of this ancient rite, though so very simple and innocent in itself, we have been frequently censured ; but only by those who oppose their own affected singularities to the universal usage of the Christian church, as well as to the early practice of all civilized nations. The use of the ring in the marriage contract was probably derived from the ancient way of expressing esteem for any person by giving him a ring. The ring was anciently used also as a signet or seal, and therefore the delivering a ring to any person denoted that he was received, as the confidant of secrets, the partner of councils, and sometimes the sharer of property, and was thus a very proper gift in marriage. Thus when Pharoah set Joseph over the land of

Egypt, he took a ring from his hand, and put it upon that of Joseph. Tertullian, whose opinions I have so often quoted, says the ring should be of gold ; which being the noblest and purest metal, and continuing longer uncorrupted, is the best emblem of the generous, pure, and durable affection which ought to subsist between married persons ; and the form of it being round, the most perfect of all figures, and always used by the ancients as symbolical of eternity, was understood to imply, that conjugal love should have no end.

MARY.—I think I have heard, as a reason, why the ring is placed upon the fourth finger of the left hand, that a vein from that finger runs direct to the heart.

MRS. V.—There is such an idea prevalent, and a very ancient one it is, though I believe entirely founded in error, it was universally believed amongst the ancient

Romans, whose married women always wore a ring upon that finger, from the notion that this vein would more directly convey to the heart that affection, of which the ring was the pledge. I believe we must seek a less romantic, though more probable reason upon this principle, that the left is the less active hand, and the 4th finger being the least exposed, the ring is less liable to accident on that finger than on any other. The ring before it is placed on the finger of the woman, must first be laid on the book, in token that we consecrate all that we have to God the true proprietor, before we presume to use them ourselves. The man then receiving the ring again from the Priest, puts it on the woman's finger, and holds it there, while he repeats after the Priest, that he weds her with the ring, worships her with his body, and endows her with his worldly goods, in the name of the Trinity. The

second clause in this sentence has been objected to our church by her adversaries, as if she had committed a great crime, in obliging the bridegroom to make an idol of his bride, and to declare in the most extravagant strain of compliment that he worships her. But this imputation is entirely owing to the want of duly considering the meaning of the old English word "*worship*," which signifies merely an honourable regard, and which may be seen in the address, still in use to magistrates, and persons in a certain rank of life; "Your worship," "the worshipful," &c. It only means that she is to have a share in all his honours and dignities, all of which, with his own person, he makes over to her in the honorable and worshipful way of a wife. However as the word is now understood in a different sense, it would perhaps have been as well to have altered it, and it seems,

that at a review of our Liturgy after the restoration of Charles II. there was a proposal to change it for honour; but why the alteration was omitted does not appear. And now the covenant being finished, it is very requisite that a blessing be desired upon it. Even the heathens looked upon the marriage contract as incomplete, if it were not accompanied by sacrifice; and therefore Christians surely cannot omit to call upon the divine Majesty on the like occasion. In the old manuals of York and Salisbury there were prayers for blessing the ring, and sprinkling it with holy water in the form of the cross; now any attempt to give holiness to an inanimate substance, was at best but a conjuration or charm, therefore our office, while it retains some of the sentiments and expressions used in these benedictions, has wisely transferred the blessing from the ring to the parties themselves.

As an example of matrimonial fidelity, our Church recommends that of Isaac and Rebekah, who were probably selected, as Isaac was the only patriarch who had not a plurality of wives. The minister, then joining the hands of the newly married pair, shall pronounce them to be man and wife in the name of the Trinity; he declares that those whom God hath joined together no man may put asunder; he then pronounces upon them one of the most beautiful forms of benediction that ever was composed: it is drawn up in imitation of the blessing prescribed by God himself in the Book of Numbers. The first marriage celebrated in Paradise was concluded with a blessing, and the example has been universally followed by the Christian Church. Tertullian observes, that the "blessing of the Church sealed the marriage;" and this was thought so important a part of the nuptial rites, that

the older forms of the celebration of matrimony were called, "the order for blessing the espoused."

Whatever is necessary for the validity of the marriage being now complete, according to the Rubric, the minister and clerk are said to go to the Altar, in order to recite the Psalms appointed, it being supposed that the marriage itself has been performed in the body of the Church, but it is now the custom, except in some very few instances, to perform the whole ceremony from the beginning at the Altar. Psalms and hymns become the celebration of nuptial rites. The time of marriage was always accounted a season of joy, and was generally attended with songs, music and dancing. Solomon's spouse was brought to him with joy and gladness; and in the nuptials of the Gentiles nothing was more usual than minstrels and musical instruments, hymns to Hymen, and

epithalamiums; but these being expressions of a less holy mirth than is becoming to Christians, the Church has chastened our joy, by choosing holy Psalms for the expression of it, in obedience to the direction of St. James, who says, "is any merry? let him sing Psalms." For the sake of variety, we are presented with two, but as the first appointed, the 128th, is clearly an epithalamium, or nuptial song, and was so used by the ancient Jews, it is the one generally read upon such occasions. The Psalm ended, to the foregoing acts of praise are added supplications and prayers, chosen from the Psalms, and put into the form of responses, that the assembled friends may show their love to the parties by publicly joining in them. After the versicles and responses, follow three prayers to be used by the Minister alone; the 1st being a prayer for spiritual blessings; the second for the temporal



blessing of children ; and the third, which is of greater antiquity than either of the preceding, beseeches God to grant that the parties may perform the duties of the state they have just entered upon: that the man may love his wife, according to the command of God ; and that the woman may be loving, faithful, amiable, and obedient. It concludes with a request for both, that they may enjoy temporal blessings, and everlasting happiness. Last of all there is added a blessing, the words of which have an evident respect to the preceding prayer, which was offered up upon such excellent grounds, and with so very great a probability of success, that the Minister may venture to pronounce and insure it to the parties, if they are but properly prepared to receive it. If there be no sermon, declaring the reciprocal duties of man and wife, the minister is desired by the Rubric to read

an exhortation, with some passages from the writings of St. Peter and St. Paul, in which the duties are most clearly set forth; and the Rubrick further enjoins all new married persons to receive the holy communion, as soon as possible after their marriage, in order to confirm their vows to each other, by that blessed sacrament, and to bind themselves more strictly to their sacred duties.

LOUISA.—What you have now told us, dear Mama, has deepened the impression, if possible, which this most solemn ceremony made upon me this morning, when I heard it so impressively and beautifully read by our friend Mr. Beverley. I then thought I was particularly interested from the deep sympathy I felt for my dear cousin, but I now see the service is excellent in itself, and admirably adapted to the occasion for which it is designed.

MRS. V.—It is indeed, my dear, and

happy would it be for society if all persons would observe the admonitions of God and the Church, and enter into this holy state like Christians indeed. The venerable Tertullian thus expresses himself: "I know not which way I should be able to show the happiness of that wedlock, the knot whereof the Church doth fasten, and the sacrament of the Church confirm."

You may now, my dear girls, go and walk with your governess, for I shall be engaged with your father for the rest of the afternoon.

CONVERSATION V.

VISITATION AND COMMUNION OF THE SICK.

Mrs. V.—My dear girls, having given you some account of the office of matrimony, I am very ready, if you wish it, to go on and give you a similar description of the rest of the forms and ceremonies of our Church.

LOUISA.—Oh! dear Mama, you cannot oblige us more.

Mrs. V.—Well then, my children, a more melancholy subject now claims our attention, I mean the visitation of the sick.


And when we feel how full of accident

and casualty is the world in which we live ; how often, in the words of the great poet of nature, "The funeral baked meats do coldly furnish forth the marriage tables ;" and how often

" When we ordain'd festival, all things
 Turn from their office to black funeral :
 Our instruments, to melancholy bells ;
 Our wedding cheer, to a sad burial feast ;
 Our solemn hymns, to sullen dirges change ;
 Our bridal flow'rs serve for a buried corse,
 And all things change them to the contraries."

I think, my children, we cannot but admire the wisdom of the Reformers of our Church, who have placed this melancholy office immediately after that of matrimony. It was the custom amongst some of the emperors of the east, to chuse the stone for their sepulchre on the very day of their coronation ; and it might moderate some of the exuberant and thoughtless mirth sometimes felt at the

marriage ceremony if the parties, by casting their eyes on the very next office in the Prayer Book, would read the useful lesson, that the very next page in the book of life may be one of trial and calamity. We are well aware that no age or sex, no state or condition, can preserve us from this common lot of mankind; so that when any person falls sick it is the duty of all those in health to remember them in their prayers, and to comfort them by their presence and sympathy whenever such visits are proper. The duty of visiting the sick is frequently recommended, both by the Old and New Testament, and God's approbation promised to those who practise it. But if this is the duty of all, it becomes in an especial manner the duty of the clergy to attend upon and comfort the sick members of their flock; and no conscientious pastor would willingly miss so



favourable an opportunity of making a happy impression. For when we are laid upon a sick bed, this world, with all its temptations, joys, and sorrows, recedes from our view; and heaven and futurity become present with us. We see all our past actions in their true colours, and listen without reluctance to that advice from our minister which before we either neglected or despised. In the first Rubric preceding this office, the sick man, or his friends, are enjoined to send notice of his sickness to the minister of the parish, in obedience to the command of St. James, "if any be sick, let them call for the elders of the Church." The sick man ought certainly to pray for himself, and his friends should also pray for him; but we cannot expect such efficacy from their prayers, as from those who are especially commissioned by Heaven to offer them up in his behalf. Now as though God by

the mouth of his Apostle commanded prayers to be made, yet as he did not prescribe any form, our Church, in pursuance of the practice of other Churches, has composed a form or office, the fullest, purest, and most perfect now extant in the world. It begins, 1st, With supplications to avert evil, in the salutation and short litany; 2dly, Prayers to procure good things, in the Lord's prayer and the two collects; 3dly, Exhortations and directions to the sick man "to forgive" freely, to give liberally, to do justice in settling his estate, and to confess his sins humbly and ingenuously to God in the person of his minister; 4thly, Consolations, in the absolution, the prayer to God to confirm it, in the 71st Psalm, and in the concluding benedictions.

MARY.—Mama, St. James, in that chapter to which you have alluded, desires that the sick person should be

anointed with oil; is that custom quite given up?

MRS. V.—It is abolished in our reformed Church, but scrupulously retained by Roman Catholics, who have converted it into a sacrament, and have added many superstitious observances to the original custom.

LOUISA.—What do you suppose was the Apostle's intention in giving that direction?

MRS. V.—In order to understand the Apostle's meaning I must inform you, my children, the practice was customary among the Jews, and it was, therefore, very natural that St. James, when writing to "the twelve tribes which were scattered abroad," and giving them instructions for the treatment of the sick, should advise the elders of the Church to use an application of oil to the sick person. You must have observed in various parts

of the New Testament that the Apostles, and even our blessed Lord himself, often sanctioned well-known customs amongst the Jews, by adopting the use of them into his purer religion, as I before remarked to you in treating of baptism. It appears that the Apostles followed the example of the Jews in anointing the sick with oil, as St. Mark mentions it when he relates the circumstance of our Lord sending out the twelve with power to heal. We are not to suppose, however, that the oil itself could produce the effect ; but was only used by the Apostles as a significant symbol of the healing influence of the Holy Spirit, and we cannot doubt but that the miraculous power resided in themselves alone, as the gift of Him who sent them to enlarge his kingdom upon earth by every possible means.

LOUISA.—I wonder why the Roman Catholics retain the custom, as they can-

not now suppose any miraculous effect of healing can follow, and there is nothing in the oil itself which can cure a sick person.

MRS. V.—So far are they from expecting any such effect, that they never use the oil till the person is thought past all hope of recovery, and is at the very point of death, from which circumstance it is called extreme unction. When the Church of Rome was convinced that this holy oil, as it was called, had no efficacy in curing diseases of the body, they concluded that it might have some wonderful effect in saving the soul. Therefore about the twelfth century it was converted into the form it now wears in the Romish Church, and was exalted into a sacrament, and applied, not for the recovery of the bodily health, but to cleanse the soul from its sins, and to prepare it for the next world. To this end they do

not apply the unction to those parts of the body which were the seat of the disorder, but to the eyes, ears, mouth, hands, and feet, as the organs or instruments of sin. This custom had become so universal, and was considered of such infinite importance, that in the infancy of the Reformation those wise men who undertook the task, with admirable kindness to the tender consciences of men, did not entirely abolish the custom, but contented themselves with modifying the practice, and then left it to the option of the sick person as to whether it should be used or not. But by degrees men's minds became reconciled to these changes, and in the second renovation of the Book of Common Prayer, the whole ceremony of unction was entirely omitted. I now proceed to give you an account of our office for the sick. The minister on entering the house uses a beautiful and

venerable form of salutation, saying "Peace be to this house, and to all who dwell in it." It is the very salutation our Lord directed his Apostles to use upon similar occasions, and the sense of the words is remarkably well adapted to the occasion. Peace signifies all outward blessings, and consequently includes health. When Joseph enquires after the health of his father, Jacob, in the 43rd chapter of Genesis, in our translation we read, that he asked, "Is your father well?" but the text in the original Hebrew means, "Is there peace with your father?"

When, therefore, a family is visited with sickness and distress, nothing is more likely to afford them comfort than this affectionate salutation from a faithful pastor; they should, therefore, receive it with thankfulness and joy, and welcome the ambassador of Heaven, who in the hour of affliction visits their dwelling

with promises of health and salvation. Being come into the sick man's presence, he then offers up supplications, or a short litany, as it is called, in which he entreats God not to remember the sins of our forefathers, nor our own, to avert from us even temporal evils, if it be his good pleasure; but, at all events, to save us from "eternal death." The persons present then join in beseeching the blessed Trinity to have mercy on them, using the very words which always prevailed with the great Physician of soul and body during his abode on earth: "Have mercy on us" was the prayer of the two blind men; the woman of Canaan, and the father of the lunatic offered the same supplication. And though our Saviour is now "gone up on high," yet as we know he "has received gifts for men," and that "his ear is not hardened that he cannot hear," we may still with confidence



offer up the same prayer. Having thus prayed against evil, we now petition for those good things of which the sick man may stand in need, and very properly begin with the Lord's Prayer, which is most suitable for a state of trial, as it expresses perfect resignation to the will of Heaven. Then follow some short versicles and responses, in which all who are present are to join with the priest, in behalf of the sick, who must, no doubt, derive great comfort from witnessing the united devotions of those who are probably the dearest friends he has on earth, ascending for his welfare to the throne of Heaven. After this the minister collects the requests of the people into two prayers; in the first he begs that while the sickness remains, it may be rendered easy to the sufferer, by a continued supply of heavenly comforts. And in the second, he proceeds further to beg

that the correction may be so sanctified that, whether it end in life or death, the sick man may derive advantage from the affliction.

LOUISA.—Mama, I think I have heard this prayer introduced into the Sunday service when a sick person desires to be prayed for.

MRS. V.—You have, my love; some clergymen use it in the way you mention, and a very beautiful and affecting prayer it is. I believe it is always so used in the Episcopal Church in Scotland. Its form has been altered since the first revision of the Common Prayer Book at the Reformation. The prayer then entreated that, as God had healed “the mother of Peter’s wife, the servant of the centurion, and as he had by means of his Angel preserved Tobit and his daughter-in-law, Sarah, so he would visit and heal the sick person then present.” But as

these cures were strictly miraculous, they could not be applicable to later times, and were, therefore, very properly omitted.

Now follows an admirable form of exhortation, which is to be addressed by the minister to the sick man, in obedience to the advice of the Apostle, "to be ready to teach and to exhort, both in season and out of season;" and surely no time can be so seasonable as when the heart of the patient is softened by suffering, and his fears too probably alarmed by the approaching view of eternity. This pious form will be still more venerable in your eyes when I tell you it is in substance exactly, and in words nearly the same, as one composed for the purpose in an ancient Council more than 800 years ago. The first part consists of instructions as to who is the author of our trials and afflictions; the gracious

purposes for which they are sent; the manner in which we ought to bear them, and the blessing to us which will arise from bearing them properly. And here, if the patient be very ill and weak, the minister may take leave of him with a blessing; but if he is able to bear a longer course of instruction, the minister goes on to examine in the first place, "Whether he repents him truly of his sins?" For as all have sinned, and stand in need of repentance, the minister can give him no good hope of comfort till he is satisfied in this point. 2dly. Whether he is in "charity with all the world, and can forgive from his heart all who have offended him?" There is no one duty more strongly enforced in the Gospel, both by the precepts and example of our blessed Lord, than this duty of forgiveness. Every act of his blameless life, and the closing scene of his agonizing


death, most affectingly preached this doctrine; and in the prayer he taught he has made it the condition of our acceptance with God. And if forgiveness is a virtue fitted for every circumstance of life, surely it is more than ever necessary when we ourselves are probably about to appear before the bar of Divine justice, laden with innumerable sins.

But besides a readiness to forgive others, the sick man must be prepared to ask forgiveness of those whom he has offended, and if he has injured them in any manner, he must endeavour to recompense them to the utmost of his power.

Zaccheus was not honoured by the visit of our Lord till he had declared his intention of making ample restitution wherever he had defrauded or oppressed.

3dly. The next branch of Christian charity to which the sick man must be

urged is liberality, to the poor. But before he is exhorted to this it is necessary he should know what is his own. It may, therefore, be right to advise him to look into his affairs, to make a will, if he has hitherto neglected that necessary duty, and to make such a just and impartial distribution of his property as may prevent jealousy, quarrelling, and it may be law-suits, amongst his family and relatives when he is gone. It may be considered in the present age that these matters scarcely fall under the clergyman's province, and probably in the higher ranks of life his interference is not necessary, but in the middling and lower classes a little kind and judicious advice is often well applied on these subjects. The Church in ancient times was so persuaded of this, that in a law passed in Convocation, in the year 1236, all persons are forbidden to make a will except in the



presence of a priest, and it is to be feared this custom was too often abused by the enrichment of convents and monasteries, to the injury of families. Even on the subject of leaving money for charitable purposes, I am of the same opinion with one of the best and most charitable of men—a man who it is at once the pride and pleasure of my life to have known, though I was too young when he died to have appreciated the benefit of his society so fully as it deserved.

MARY.—Oh ! we know him too, for I am sure, Mama, you mean Mr. Stevens.

MRS. V.—You have guessed right, dear girl, and you do know him well from having read repeatedly the most interesting memoirs of him, written by Mr. Justice Park. It was his opinion, that as charity was entirely a personal virtue, it should be exercised during life, and by leaving your property away from

your relations, you prevented them from exercising this grace themselves, and of proving themselves good stewards of God's blessings. After this advice respecting his private and secular affairs, the sick man, according to the Rubric, is now "to be moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feels his conscience troubled with any weighty matter."

LOUISA.—I think, Mama, I have heard that the Roman Catholics consider frequent confession to a priest necessary, is it not so?

MRS. V.—It is, and they require it not only as a duty, but have advanced it to the dignity of a sacrament. It is generally called the Sacrament of Penance, because the auricular confession to the priest of every sin the penitent can call to mind, is followed by penance, ordained by the priest as an expiation for the offence. These penances are of various

kinds besides fasting and alms ; they are frequently varied by repeating a certain number of ave-marias (or prayers to the virgin), pater-nosters (or the Lord's prayers), and credos (or creeds), and sometimes by wearing a hair cloth shirt, giving oneself a number of lashes, with other superstitions too numerous, and some of them too absurd to mention, but all involving the unscriptural doctrine that we can, by torturing our bodies, atone for the sins of our souls, and thus detracting from the one great and "only sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world"—I mean our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ. Very different is the practice of the Church of England in this particular. She has freed confession from the abuses of the Romish Church, and reduced it to the primitive plan ; she neither calls it a sacrament, nor requires it to be constantly used ; but in


two cases she advises her children to have recourse to their own immediate pastor, or to some other learned and discreet minister of God's word, and open his grief to him. The first of these is, if a man wishes to present himself at the Table of the Lord, and yet feels in his conscience unfit so to do ; but by thus having recourse to the appointed ambassador of heaven, he may have his mind set at rest by godly advice and counsel, to the quieting of his conscience, and the avoiding all doubt and scruple for the future. The other case is, when the awful king of terrors is making his approach, and the heart of the sick man sinks back appalled at his presence ; the minister can more effectually assist him in his last struggle with this inveterate foe, when he knows the particular sin which has armed the tyrant with his most terrific sting. For this reason then,

though our Church, during the season of health, leaves it to the discretion of her children as to whether they will be satisfied with a *general* confession to God and the Church; yet when sickness overtakes them, she advises that they be then "*moved* to make a *special* confession of their sins to a priest, if they feel their consciences troubled with any weighty matter." After the sick person has made a special confession of his sins, "the priest is to absolve him, if he humbly and heartily desire it."

LOUISA.—Has not this form of absolution been objected to as too absolute?

MRS. V.—You are right, my dear, but I think the objection arises from the cavillers not having understood the subject. Our best ecclesiastical writers have explained it variously. Wheatley leans to the supposition that this form of absolution is intended merely to release the

penitent from the Church censures, to which the crimes he has just confessed may have rendered him liable. And he is confirmed in this opinion from the circumstance of the next collect, *continuing* to pray earnestly for pardon and forgiveness, which could not be necessary if he had been absolutely pardoned and forgiven by God, by virtue of the absolution just pronounced ; and as the priest farther offers a special request to God to preserve and continue him in the unity of the Church, it certainly gives some colour to the supposition, that the absolution was pronounced to restore him to its peace. Archbishop Secker coincides in this opinion. The form is very ancient, and consists of two parts : the one entreating for pardon, the other dispensing it ; and in the adoption of it we cannot but admire the prudence and humanity of her Reformers. The piety and humanity of




the Church would not refuse to her dying members the comfort of absolution, very full and authoritative in its form; and her prudence, with equal caution, has placed many limits to the frequent use of it. Before it is pronounced, the sick person must first declare his FAITH in all the articles of the Christian faith; 2dly, That he repents him *truly* of all his sins; and lastly, that he is in perfect charity with all men. The minister must examine whether he is a true penitent and sincere believer; and we know that God himself pardoneth and absolveth all such persons. The form itself is as guarded as any indicative form can be, and in the wording of it declares, that remission of sins is granted only to the true penitent believer, and, therefore, by implication, if the sick person feels himself to be that true penitent, he understands that he is receiving the pardon

and absolution of God, by the mouth of his duly authorized servant. Before the Reformation this power left with the ministers of the Church was ascribed to St. Peter, and to him was the first part of the prayer addressed, but this was of course altered by our Church as blasphemous and superstitious.

After the absolution, the priest prays to God to ratify the act, and to bestow on the patient the comforts of religion. The 71st Psalm then follows, which most beautifully expresses the sick man's hopes and desires, and at the same time supports his faith, exalts his love, upholds his patience, and revives his hopes. Almost all the Churches of Christendom have agreed in selecting this psalm for this particular office.

It now being probable that we are about to take a last farewell of the dear



brother or sister now about to depart, we do it with a most comprehensive and affecting blessing. The first is directed to God the Son, to obtain pardon for sin by his death and passion. The second is a blessing in the name of God the Father, intended to procure the defence of his Providence. The last is an address to the whole Trinity; wherein, that the sick person may be safe in life and in death, we commit him unto God's gracious mercy and protection, "who is able to keep him from falling, and to present him spotless before his throne," praying that God the Father may bless him with all good, and preserve him from all evil; that God the Son may be gracious unto him in the pardon of all his sins; and that God the Holy Ghost may give him that sweet peace of conscience which will fill him with joy in life, support his

steps through the gloomy valley of the shadow of *death*, and finally be his passport to realms of everlasting day.

LOUISA.—Many, many thanks, dear Mama, for this and all your other kindness. If I am ever seriously ill, it will be one of my most earnest wishes to be accompanied in this beautiful service by some kind and pious clergyman. But as I am sure you must be completely fatigued, we will not allow you to talk any more just now. So good bye, dear Mama, for the present,

CONVERSATION VI.

BURIAL OF THE DEAD.

MRS. VERNON.—My dear children, I have now given you some account of the form which our excellent Church has provided for us, in which we may offer up our prayers to Heaven for those dear friends who are stretched upon the bed of pain and sickness ; but as we know that prayers for their recovery cannot always be successful ; “ that it is appointed unto all men once to die,” we must with resignation submit to the will of that “ God in whose hands are the issues of life and death ;” and having with

pious awe committed the spirit to him who gave it, it becomes the duty of survivors to dispose of the perishing body, by performing decently and religiously the rites of sepulture. Since our last conversation, I have been employing myself in looking into several books upon the subject, and I have been so much interested in the relations I have met with of the various modes in which those rites have been performed in different ages, and among different nations, that if you think it will not fatigue your attention, I am tempted to lengthen the introduction, if I may so call it, to our own most beautiful and religious form of prayer on this solemn occasion, by giving you some account of these ancient ceremonies.

LOUISA.—I cannot express how truly grateful we feel for all the trouble you give yourself in thus collecting informa-


tion for our benefit, and, surely, the least we can promise in return is our earnest and undivided attention.

MRS. V.—It is impossible for any person at all conversant with the ancient writers, either sacred or profane, to doubt that the religious care, and decent disposal of the bodies of the dead, has always been esteemed one of the most sacred duties of society. The Book of Genesis, the oldest extant, informs us with what pious care the funerals of Sarah, of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, were performed by their nearest relatives. Nay, I cannot omit reminding you of another beautiful trait of the affectionate kindness of the Patriarchal manners to old and faithful servants, for in the 35th chapter of Genesis we read, that the most respectful funeral rites were performed for Deborah, the nurse of Rebekah, and that a tree was planted to mark the spot

where slept this faithful attendant of all her mistress's fortunes. Even by the Heathens the burial of the dead was esteemed a divine institution, and a law of the immortal Gods.

LOUISA.—Who were the first heathen people of whose funeral rites we have any account?

MRS. V.—I believe this honour is due to the Egyptians, who were the posterity of Ham. They were the first cultivators of idolatrous worship and superstition after the flood; they were also the first who asserted the immortality of the soul, but they disfigured this belief with the monstrous supposition that the soul migrated into all kinds of animals, and thus did penance for 3000 years, when it returned into the human body. It was for this reason that they were so careful in embalming the body, an art now nearly lost, at least, the perfection to which it



had been brought by the Egyptians is now unknown.

MARY.—Are not the famous pyramids supposed to be the burial places of the Egyptians?

MRS. V.—They are so, and remain as vast monuments of the wealth and splendour of the people of Egypt in those early ages, though, from the almost incredible magnificence and cost of these stupendous structures, we may reasonably suppose that these people were more solicitous about their tombs than their houses. Interment, or depositing the body in the earth, is certainly the most natural, and seems to have been the most ancient and general method of disposing of the dead. And even in Greece, which appears to be the country where burning the dead was first practised, burying was of higher antiquity. Before they disposed of the body, amongst the Greeks, it had to un-

dergo several strange ceremonies. A piece of money was placed in the mouth of the deceased, and a cake, composed of flour and honey, in the hand; the first, as the fee to Charon for ferrying him over the infernal river; the other, as a bribe to the three-headed dog, Cerberus, the supposed door-keeper, or guardian of the entrance to hell. When burning the body had superseded burying it, the deceased was placed on the funeral pile, and while the whole was consuming, the friends stood round, pouring forth libations of wine, and calling on the deceased. The bones or ashes were afterwards collected and placed in costly urns and vases; and if the person was of rank and wealth, feasts of many days continuance were frequently held in honour of his memory.


LOUISA.—Did the ancient Romans bury or burn their dead?

MRS. V.—The earliest histories we possess lead us to suppose that interment was at first universal amongst them. Indeed, the well-known Sylla was the first person of rank in Rome whose body was burned. He had deluged the streets of Rome with the blood of innocent citizens, and among other enormities, had violated the tomb of Marius, whose body he caused to be dug up and thrown into the river Anio. Dreading, therefore, that his countrymen might be induced to retaliate, and treat his dead body with indignity, he gave orders that it should be reduced to ashes. From that period the custom of erecting a funeral pile became general among the Romans, but by no means universal.

The rites which preceded the final ceremony were even more numerous among the Romans than among the Greeks, but are not of a nature to require us to dwell upon them at present.

MARY.—Dear Mama, we should prefer having some account of the customs of the English before they were converted to Christianity.

MRS. V.—It is not very easy to collect any really authentic history of the proceedings of the ancient Britons with regard to any of their religious ceremonies ; because the Druids (who as you know were the priests and ministers of religion in those early times,) were so jealous of their mysteries becoming generally known, that they kept their peculiar doctrines as private as possible, and instead of committing them to writing for the benefit of posterity, they were transmitted by oral tradition ; and it was, therefore, a principal part of the education of those youths who were intended for the priesthood, to commit to memory the doctrines and ceremonies of their religion. Almost all the information we



possess upon this subject has been derived from a minute examination of those very curious places of sepulture which have been discovered in various parts of the British isles, and which are called Barrows or Cairns. Some of these tumuli appear to have been family burying places, and to have contained many stone coffins, placed in tiers : and I have read an account of a very curious one which was opened some time ago in Dorsetshire, which afforded very interesting ground of speculation to the antiquarian and the scholar.

LOUISA.—Will you be kind enough to give us an account of it?

MRS. V.—On opening this barrow, which was two hundred feet in circumference, and twelve feet in height, there were found, a little beneath the surface, a number of burnt human bones, and, likewise, the bones of various kinds of

animals, small pieces of metal, with other substances. In the centre of the barrow, about four feet from the surface, an entire skeleton was found, lying in the posture of a person asleep. These circumstances lead us to the dreadful conclusion that the ancient Britons sacrificed their captives, and even domestic animals, to the manes of their illustrious dead. And this supposition is fully confirmed by the writings of Richard of Cirencester, a learned Monk of the fourteenth century, whose topographical description of Britain is very curious, and received as very authentic. He says, "the funeral ceremonies of the ancient Britons were very magnificent; all things which they prized during life, even arms and favourite animals, were consumed in the funeral pile raised to the honour of the departed chief, in order that they might be ready for his use when his spirit should reach



the land of shadows : while, to appease the discontented manes, human victims (either slaves or captives taken in battle) were frequently enclosed in cages, made of basket or wicker work, and consumed alive in the devouring flames ; while their cries and shrieks were drowned by the shouts of the savage multitude, and the melodious swell of the Druids' harps, to which they chaunted verses in honour of the mighty dead."

MARY.—Oh, dear Mama, how very dreadful ! I can scarcely bear to think of such horrors ; what barbarous savages they must have been !

MRS. V.—Indeed, my love, human nature when unsoftened by the mild influence of Christianity, is too prone to cruel barbarity, and wild and savage as we are apt to suppose the ancient Britons must have been in the dark ages when such acts were perpetrated, it is curious


to observe that the Grecians, who were certainly the most polished people of antiquity, indulged their feelings of revenge, when any of their chiefs were slain in battle, in an exactly similar manner. If you, my love, will go and bring Pope's Homer, I will show you a description of the funeral rites which took place in honour of Patroclus, the friend of Achilles.

MARY.—Here is the book, Mama.

MRS. V.—The whole account is very long, but you may read this passage.

MARY.—(*reads.*)

“ While those deputed to inter the slain,
Heap with a rising pyramid the plain,
A hundred foot in length, a hundred wide,
The growing structure spreads on every side;
High on the top the manly corse they lay,
And well-fed sheep and sable oxen slay :
Achilles cover'd with their fat the dead,
And the pil'd victims round the body spread.




Then jars of honey, and of fragrant oil,
Suspend around, low bending o'er the pile.
Four sprightly coursers, with a deadly groan,
Pour forth their lives, and on the pyre are thrown.
Of nine large dogs, domestic at his board,
Fall two, selected to attend their Lord.
Then last of all, and horrible to tell,
Sad sacrifice! twelve Trojan captives fell;
On these the rage of fire victorious preys,
Involves and joins them in one common blaze."

LOUISA.—It is indeed most curious to trace such very similar customs in people so far removed from each other, and so different in almost every other respect as were the Grecians and the early inhabitants of Britain. Pray, Mama, is it not supposed that Stonehenge is a funeral monument?

MRS. V.—That stupendous monument of antiquity has excited the wonder of the learned for many ages, and has been the fruitful subject of much controversy

and learned disquisition. The first writer who mentions it, Geoffry of Monmouth, supposes it to have been raised by the enchanter, Merlin, to commemorate the fate of 460 Britons, who were murdered by Hengist, the Saxon. A later writer, Polydore Virgil, says it was erected by the Britons as a sepulchre for Aurelius Ambrosius; while others have asserted that it was raised in honour of Boadicea, the famous British Queen. However, my children, all this being foreign to our original intention, as well as mere matter of conjecture, I will proceed to mention a people whose early history is more known, and far better authenticated; I mean the ancient Jews, whose funeral rites were very splendid and expensive. It appears that the custom of burying the body was universal amongst them; though there are a few passages in our translation of the Old Testament, which



might lead us to imagine it was occasionally burnt : for instance, in the 31st chapter of 1st Samuel, and the 6th of Amos. But upon comparing these texts with others, and above all, I am told, the original language justifies the idea, that the burning there alluded to was the burning of aromatic spices and odours around the dead body, which was an honour they usually performed to their kings, as we find in the 16th chapter of 2d Chronicles, “ And when Asa died, they laid him in a bed which was filled with sweet odours, and divers kinds of spices, prepared by the apothecary’s art ; and they made a very great burning for him.” It was also customary on the death of any person, for the friends and relations to rend or tear their clothes in token of affliction, which custom is now faintly imitated by the modern Jews, who on similar occasions cut off a small piece of their garment.

MARY.—Do not you think, Mama, it is very unnecessary to waste large sums of money in burying the dead.

MRS. V.—Any lavish or extravagant expense, merely to gratify the pride of survivors, is certainly unnecessary and wrong; but this does not apply to a decent regard to the memory of those whom it has pleased God to take from us. The description of our blessed Lord's funeral, and his high commendation of the woman who had prepared 300 pennyworth of spikenard for his burial, has always been considered an encouragement to Christians to bestow respectful funereal rites on deceased friends. And surely if common sense told the Heathen that it was proper to take a respectful care of the dead, Christians should not neglect those bodies who were once dedicated to Christ in baptism, were the living temples of the Holy Ghost, for he

the good fight with faith and patience, and are now laid down to sleep in the Lord, till in the last day their scattered dust shall be reunited, and fashioned like the glorious body of their great Redeemer. These considerations bring me, my children, to the account I purposed giving you of the funeral customs of the early Christians.

Immediately after death the body was carefully washed, as we see in the account of the death of Tabitha. The next operation, they still retained from the Jews, of embalming or anointing the body with aromatic and antiseptic oils or ointments; but as this was an expensive ceremony, it was confined to the rich, and no doubt Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were moved to confer this honour upon the body of our Lord, in order to fulfil the prophecy, which had declared, that though he was poor, and

had not where to lay his head during his life, yet was "he to make his grave with the *rich* in his death." After this ceremony the body was clothed in funereal garments, which were generally of "fine linen," and we learn from the Gospel, that by the Jews it was in that state committed to the earth; but the primitive Christians soon adopted from the Romans the custom of placing it first in a chest or coffin; from this time, till it was carried out for interment, it was watched night and day by the relations and pious friends, who spent the time in singing hymns of praise and in offering up prayer. We may trace our present beautiful burial service in observing the course pursued by the very earliest Christians. The priests preceded the corpse to the place of interment, and the friends followed. When the times of persecution had ceased, this procession was attended by psalmody;

the priests selecting such portions of the psalms and hymns from the Old and New Testament as were suited to the occasion.

From the concurrent testimony of the early writers, the fact is incontestible, that they did also offer up prayers at this solemnity ; and they gave thanks to God, as is now the custom of the Church of England, “ for delivering the deceased out of the miseries of this sinful world.” A deacon read such portions of Scripture as contained promises of the resurrection, and appropriate psalms were read at the interment as well as during the procession. Orations were likewise frequently made for such as had been eminent for piety and virtue.

LOUISA.—Pray, Mama, did the early Christians bury in churches or not?

MRS. V.—In the early ages no Christian ever thought of burying the dead within temples, or places appointed for the

purposes of Christian worship. It is to the middle ages of Christianity that we must look for this innovation on the early customs of the Church. Even in the patriarchal ages they did not presume to bury their dead in those places which the Almighty had hallowed by any manifestation of his presence; from a variety of references in many parts of the Bible we may collect that the Jews did not even bury within their cities. The inhabitants of Nain were carrying the young man *out* of the city gates when our Lord met them; and “when the bodies of the saints that slept, arose after his resurrection, and came out of their graves, they went *into* the holy city.” The first Christian cemeteries were large vaults or cavities underground, which they commonly dug in fields. Jerom gives us the following description of these catacombs: he says,



“when he was a boy, and lived at Rome, where he had been sent for education, he and his school-fellows used on Sundays to visit the sepulchres of the Apostles and Martyrs, and that he frequently descended into the vaults, which were dug deep in the earth, and contained on each side, along the walls, the bodies of those that had been buried. These vaults were lighted only by small crevices left open at the top, and all around was so dark that it was necessary to step with great caution. The scene,” he says, “reminded him forcibly of the psalmist’s expression, ‘Let them go down quick into hell.’” And in these melancholy cemeteries were the persecuted Church of Christ frequently obliged to meet during the three first centuries of Christianity, for the purposes of religious worship; when the cruel vigilance of their

enemies rendered it unsafe for them to assemble in their oratories, or rooms set apart for this purpose in private houses.

MARY.—Mama, what is the exact meaning of the word cemetery?

MRS. V.—It is derived from a Greek word, and means a chamber for sleep, or dormitory. In some parts of ancient Greece, houses for the reception of travellers were thus called; and in every language of the world death has always been expressed in figurative terms, which convey the idea of rest and sleep. Thus the first Christians gave the name of cemeteries to those places where the bodies of the faithful were deposited to sleep till the morning of the general resurrection.

The custom of burying in churches may be traced to the honours which, at a later period, began to be paid to Saints and Martyrs. Churches at length were built near the places where they had been

interred, and in the tenth century, their ashes and bones were brought into the churches, and were deposited under the altar as sacred relics, and these relics were afterwards invested by the priests with an imaginary power of working miracles, healing diseases, and delivering their votaries from calamity and danger. The people being soon persuaded that the efficacy of these relics extended not only to the living, but to the dead, and that, upon the intercession of these Saints, not only spiritual and temporal blessings were procured, but that the felicity of the separated soul was increased, and the body prepared for a more glorious resurrection on its reunion with it; we cannot wonder, therefore, to hear that the living should be most solicitous to bury those most dear to them as near as possible to those sacred relics, in whose succour they were taught to confide. And we must,

I fear, however unwillingly, allow that the avarice and corruption of the Church of Rome was but too ready to encourage a superstition which brought incalculable wealth to their coffers; for the sum expected for permission to repose near these precious relics was very large, and often occasioned the entire alienation of family estates. Towards the close of the eighth century, Cuthbert, Archbishop of Canterbury, introduced into England the practice of converting the ground near the church into a common cemetery, and obtained a bull from the Pope, "for making cemeteries near churches, even in cities." And all churches erected from that period had a piece of ground adjoining, or near to them, set apart and consecrated to that purpose; and though burying within the church itself has never been a general practice in England, and can never be done without the permission of the in-

cumbent for the time being, yet for the last 800 years it has not been uncommon for persons of rank and fortune to possess family vaults and burying places within the walls of the church.

Having now, my dear girls, given you all the introductory information which occurs to me as necessary, or likely to interest you, I will proceed to the consideration of the sublime and beautiful form which has been framed for our Church on this awful and solemn occasion. The venerable Church, to which, my children, it is our highest privilege to belong, has wisely and piously endeavoured to render the interment of the dead, a source of edification and instruction to the living. When pride is humbled and the heart softened by affliction; when the coffin, slowly borne to the house of God, pausing there awhile in its way to the grave, or placed in its narrow man-

sion, and receiving the last looks of sorrowing affection, proclaims with a voice which cannot be misunderstood, the speedy and inevitable end of all worldly enjoyments ; then is the mourner taught to look to his Redeemer, as to the “ Resurrection and the life, in whom whosoever believeth, though he were dead, yet shall he live ;” he is taught, “ if the Lord has taken away,” he has taken only “ what he gave ;” he is taught, “ that though man walketh in a vain shadow, yet his help is truly in the Lord ;” he is taught, “ so to number his days, that he may apply his heart unto wisdom ;” he is taught, that “ a voice from heaven has proclaimed, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord ; even so saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours ;” he is taught, “ not to be sorry as men without hope for them that sleep in Christ ;” he is taught, that the souls of the faithful,

after they are "delivered from the burthen of the flesh, are with Christ, in joy and felicity;" he is taught, that, though "earth be committed to earth, dust to dust, and ashes to ashes, it is in sure and certain hope of the resurrection of the just to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself." These, my beloved children, are some of the precious lessons taught the Christian in that awful moment which is sufficient to overwhelm the infidel with despair. The Christian retires to his home, after leaving in the grave, it may be, the dearest object of his affections, dejected, but not desponding; sorrowing, but not without hope. But who shall dare to raise the veil which shrouds the infidel's sorrows in that awful and tremendous hour!

I shrink from the task, but will hasten to consider more fully those consoling passages of Scripture, and those comforting prayers, from which the good man is enabled to extract a blessing from affliction itself.


Since it is not only natural, but even praiseworthy, that we should feel a chastened sorrow when following to the grave those we love, the Church calls in the aid of religion to raise and cheer our dejected hearts. At the very entrance of the church-yard the holy man comes forth to meet us, and immediately salutes us with the Gospel of Peace. He begins with the very words spoken by the blessed Jesus, as he was approaching the grave of a beloved friend, with intent to comfort an afflicted mourner. The grief of Martha for her brother's loss had nearly overcome her faith in Jesus, and it is not unusual for excessive affliction to have a similar

effect on us. But our Lord, in these sublime words, comforts not only the weeping sister to whom they were at first addressed, but the pious mourner in every age, by reminding us of his Omnipotence and entire command over death and the grave. This sentence is intended to excite our faith; the second sentence is a noble exercise of it. It is that declaration of holy Job wherein he declares his entire belief in the future resurrection of the body. The old translation of this verse, which formed a part of our burial service till the last revision of the Prayer Book, when it was altered to its present form, was more agreeable to the ancient versions and to the readings of the early Fathers. Chrysostom and Hieronymus thus translate the passage:—"I know that my Redeemer liveth; and that I shall rise out of the earth in the last day, and shall be covered again with my skin,

and shall see God in my flesh ; yea, and I myself shall behold Him, not with other, but with these same eyes."

In this view of the subject, it is an exact prophecy of the resurrection of the actual body, and is an admirable consolation to all that mourn the loss of friends, to believe that the same person we now commit to the earth, there to moulder to dust, will, by the power of God, rise from the grave and live again. We lose sight of him for a season, but we know that " Jesus, our Redeemer, liveth," and that if we love and serve Him, during our pilgrimage here below, we, and those friends who are gone before, shall one day be all reunited in His presence in Heaven.

The third sentence calls upon us to exercise the grace of patience. If we are tempted to murmur at our loss, we are reminded that God graciously gave, or lent those we have loved, for a season, and has now resumed the gift in order to



wean our affections from this sublunary scene. We should, therefore, rather bless Him who granted them to us so long, rather than murmur at his having removed them from the trials and afflictions of the world.

The body being brought into Church, and reverently placed in the principal aisle, the minister proceeds to read the appointed psalms.

LOUISA.—Does it not appear rather extraordinary to use psalms at funerals, as psalms and hymns generally seem to be expressions of joy?

MRS. V.—It may appear so at first sight, but, upon mature consideration, it is very proper. Even the wiser heathens buried their dead with expressions of joy, lamenting their own lot in being left behind, whilst their friend was gone to be immortalized above. And almost all the ancient Fathers allude to the custom of

the primitive church in making hymns and hallelujahs a part of their funeral ceremonies. Our Church has also selected the psalms to be used on this occasion so judiciously, that not a shadow of objection can rest against their being recited. The first, or 39th, is supposed to have been composed by David when he was reproached by Joab for expressing extravagant grief for the death of Absalom, and is, therefore, peculiarly calculated to moderate any violent transports of sorrow in the present mourners. The other, or 90th, is a funeral dirge, probably written by Moses upon the death of that vast multitude of murmuring Israelites, who were destined "to leave their carcasses to be wasted in the wilderness." It is a noble composition, and very proper to raise in us those sublime contemplations, and pious devotions, which ought to attend this awful solemnity. The minister

now reads that beautiful chapter from Corinthians, in which St. Paul gives us the most full and circumstantial account of the resurrection of the body which is to be found in the Bible. The resurrection of the dead is “the foundation of our faith, the pillar of our hope, and the key-stone of the Christian fabric.” Therefore, a discourse on the subject is peculiarly proper at this solemnity, being at once calculated to alleviate our sorrow for our lost friend, to strengthen our faith and hope, and to encourage us, by persevering in every virtue, to prepare for our own departure out of this world, and for the resurrection to eternal life.

The lesson ended, the melancholy procession assemble round the grave, which is called by the Jews “the long habitation,” and by the early Christians “the bed of rest;” and here, while the attendants are preparing to place the body in its

last abode, the minister offers to the meditation of those around a noble strain of devotion, acknowledging the shortness, misery, and uncertainty of life, our dependence on God, and a fervent prayer to Him to support us under the pains of temporal death here, and to preserve us from eternal death hereafter. Surely there is something more truly rational and devout in these holy prayers so calculated to affect and improve the heart, than in the idle ceremonies of blessing the grave, sprinkling it with holy water, and perfuming it with incense, as the Romish Church enjoins. Next after these sentences follows the solemn interment. The casting of earth upon a dead body was esteemed an act of piety by the heathens themselves, so much so, that any person who discovered one by accident, and neglected thus to conceal it, was considered to have committed a great crime. And

it was considered so essential a part of the Burial Service, that when our Church was first reformed the priest himself was enjoined to cast the earth into the grave ; but the Rubric, in our present Liturgy, merely directs that it shall be done by some person present, and this is now always the clerk or sexton, while the minister recites the solemn words, “ Forasmuch as it has pleased Almighty God of His great mercy, to take unto Himself the soul of our dear brother (or sister) here departed, we, therefore, commit his body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be like unto His glorious body,” &c.

LOUISA.—Mama, I really feel quite unwilling to mention, that I wish for particular information with regard to the

words of this address, because it seems as if *I* were inclined to find fault with our most beautiful Liturgy, when I am sure no one can admire it more cordially than I do ; but the fact is, I often hear objections of this nature started in conversation and not always refuted to my satisfaction ; but as I do not think I ought yet to intrude myself upon the attention of company by my questions, I thought it better to wait till I could ask you, dear Mama, in private.

Mrs. V.—I hope, my dearest child, you will never hesitate to bring all your doubts and difficulties at all times, and upon all occasions, to your mother, whose greatest happiness it is to endeavour to enlighten your mind on every subject to the utmost of her own ability. What is the question my child now wishes to ask ?


LOUISA.—Why, Mama, I heard a gentleman the other day, in the drawing-




room, object to Mr. Beverley, first, that it was improper to use the words, that God had taken to himself the soul of the deceased at the burial of a wicked person ; and also, that in saying we commit him to the ground in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, we imply a belief that all persons so buried, the wicked as well as the good, will rise to happiness and glory. Mr. Beverley was just beginning to explain these passages, when I was most unwillingly obliged to obey a summons from Miss Hammond.

MRS. V.—I perfectly remember the conversation, and will repeat, to the best of my recollection, the explanation which our worthy and excellent clergyman gave of these often-contested passages. And for the first, as we are told in Scripture, that with regard to the death of all men in general, “ that the dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall

return to God who gave it ;” it follows, that God may be properly said to take unto himself the souls of all men, even the most notorious offenders. When good men die, He takes them to Himself, that is, to eternal life and happiness ; and, when the wicked depart, He still takes them to Himself, that is, to His own most righteous and just judgment. When the soul, by which the body lives, is once recalled by Him who placed it therein, death doth immediately follow that separation ; and though the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is, perhaps, in a degree, figurative, yet I think we may venture to deduce from it, that the souls both of the virtuous and the wicked are taken by the Almighty, and by Him assigned to various abodes of comparative happiness and misery, there to await their final doom in the last judgment. And this seems to be all our Church ~~meant~~




express in the words under consideration. The other objection is, that we commit indiscriminately *all* to the earth in sure and certain hope of resurrection. This phrase, of committing his body to the earth, implies, that we deliver it into safe custody, and into such hands as will faithfully restore it again. We do not cast it away, as a lost and perishing carcass, but carefully lay it in the ground, as having in it a seed of eternity, and in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, not that we believe that every one we bury shall rise again to joy and felicity, or profess this sure and certain hope of every one whom we inter. We admit that the words "eternal life" are to be understood in the better sense; but still we maintain, that the preceding conclusion will by no means follow. In these words there is not the most remote allusion to the particular lot of any indi-



vidual, for we pretend not to decide on the final state of any man. The words are *not*, in sure and certain hope of *his* or *her* resurrection to eternal life, but of *the* resurrection to eternal life; and they simply express our belief in our blessed Lord's promise, that there will be a general and glorious resurrection. And that these words merely express the faith of the assembled congregation, and not any special reference to the case of the deceased person, may be gathered from the following part of the sentence, where we do not say that Christ shall change *his* or *her* vile body, but *our* vile body that it may be like, &c. And that this is no forced or unnatural construction must be admitted, if we examine the corresponding passage in the burial office of the dead at sea,—“ We commit his body to the deep, to be turned into corruption, looking for *the resurrection of the body*,

when the sea shall give up her dead, through our Lord Jesus Christ," &c. Now the words, in "sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life;" and "looking for *the resurrection of the body*, and of the life to come," mean neither more nor less than a belief of "the resurrection of the body, and of the life everlasting," as expressed in the Apostles' creed. It was thus, my children, that our worthy pastor explained these passages, and he had the comfort of finding he had convinced his youthful antagonist. We will now return to the Burial Service. After the solemn service of interment, follows a consolatory sentence from the Revelation granted to St. John, which, though it might be at first intended for the first Christians, is well calculated to comfort all who mourn; inasmuch as it is a voice from Heaven proclaiming, "Blessed are all those who die in the

Lord !” The purport of the sentence is an assurance, that all the virtuous and righteous, who have departed this life, are in a state of happiness, and rest from their labours and sorrows. The Protestant Church also placed this sentence before the succeeding collects, in order to give a just reason *why* we do not pray for the dead, as they do in the Romish Church ; because, if they die in the Lord, the dead are blessed already, so that we cannot, with reason, pray for what they already enjoy. Having improved this awful occasion, by way of instruction and pious meditation, we now address our requests to Almighty God in our own behalf, who alone are capable of receiving benefit from prayer, and use the Lesser Litany, as it is called, praying, 1st, to the Father, that He may deliver us from the miseries of this life ; 2dly, to the Son, that He may pardon us the



guilt of our sins ; and 3dly, to the Ghost, that He may sanctify and us from our corruptions. And we need all good things, and know what to ask, we add the Lord's in which we acknowledge, that we have lost a friend on earth, y we have a far greater, even a Father in Heaven, at whose dispensation we murmur, but hallow his name, and that " His kingdom of glory may when we and all our friends shall be again ; and that whether He ordain death, " His will, not ours, be done ; the rest of the prayer depicts our deplorable condition in this life. We require " bread " to sustain us ; mercy " to comfort and grace to deliver us from evil both temporal and eternal. Then follow the collects ; in the 1st, we profess our thanksgiving for the happy state of the spirits of good people departed ; we then give thanks

delivery of our departed friend from the miseries of this sinful world ; and, lastly, we pray for the speedy advent of Christ's kingdom, that we, and all who are departed in the true faith, may have our eternal consummation and bliss in His holy kingdom.

Our young friend, my dear Louisa, to whose objections you before alluded, also suggested to our venerable friend, whether there was not an impropriety in thanking God for the death of a near relation or friend, as is done in this prayer?

LOUISA—And what did Mr. Beverley say, Mama?

MRS. V.—That though it would be unnatural not to feel the loss of a dear relation or friend as a man, yet we should learn to bear it as a Christian ; and that when we consider from what our departed friend is delivered and what he has to suffer, it would be most unkind to him

thankful to God, not to rejoice in a certain degree. These cavils, my children, prove too often, I fear, a want of that faith and hope, which enabled the early Christians, as I have before told you, to carry out their dead with songs of triumph. As the last prayer respects the whole company, so the last collect seems more particularly intended for the especial consolation of the relations of the deceased. It is a plain prohibition to excessive grief, by laying before the mourner the best topics of consolation; we express our hope, that the person whom we are now burying rests in the hope of the resurrection; and though those who love to find fault have likewise objected to us this hope in the case of all, we can only answer that our Church supposes her children will take *all* her offices together, and the person now buried is, by the Church, supposed


to have repented his sins, and to have received the Holy Communion according to her directions. And as her forms are intended for all, it would be a dangerous power to leave the alteration of them in the hands of a finite being, who could never judge of the real state of the heart. It is much wiser to leave the individual dead in the hands of Him, who has said, "Who art thou, who judgest another man's servant?" "And judge not, that ye be not judged." The prayer then goes on to supplicate for the living, that we may be partakers of the first or spiritual resurrection, by "rising from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness;" that when we depart this life, we may be with Christ; and that, lastly, at our resurrection on the last day, we may receive the blessing which shall be pronounced on all who love and fear God. The service then ends with the an-

and apostolic blessing, wherein we pray, that the merits of Christ, the love of the Father, and the aid of the Holy Spirit, may protect us in our passage through this sublunary world, and bring us at length to the haven where we would be.

MARY.—Thank you, dear Mama, I now feel, that nothing in the world could so soon comfort me under the loss of a near and dear friend as a full and particular study of this beautiful Burial Service.

MRS. V.—You are right, my child, Christianity nowhere commands us to stifle our grief; and the Church of England, forming herself upon the same model, only offers to the mourner the noblest kind of consolation. The tears which our blessed Lord shed over Lazarus will ever be a source of comfort to those who are called on to weep over those they love. But religion teaches

them to dry their tears by the hope of meeting again. She sends them home from the grave sorrowing, it is true, but not as those without hope ; she teaches them to pray, that the Lord will pardon their past sins, and so enable them to serve Him for the future, that they may courageously meet death themselves, and patiently bear the loss of those who are gone before, that they may all one day be awakened by the voice of our blessed Redeemer, and be entitled to a happy reunion in his kingdom in Heaven. **God bless you, my dear Girls,** and good night ; our conversation has been of a nature to render a little solitude both useful and agreeable to us all.



CONVERSATION VII.

The Thanksgiving of Women after Child-Birth,

COMMONLY CALLED

THE CHURCHING OF WOMEN.

LOUISA.—I should not have expected, Mama, to find any other office placed after the Burial of the Dead, and yet in almost all Prayer Books we find the office for Churching Women placed after it.

MRS. V.—It is probably so placed, my love, in order to intimate, that owing to the great pain and peril every mother must encounter, her recovery may be considered almost a revival or resurrection from the dead. Indeed, the birth of man is so truly wonderful, that it seems

designed for a lasting memorial of God's great power and goodness ; but lest the frequency of the occurrence should diminish our wonder and gratitude, our Church has wisely and piously prepared a short form of public and solemn acknowledgment to be used by every woman on whom the miracle has been wrought, who still feels the consequence of the fall of our first parents, and bears the punishment which Eve entailed upon the whole sex.

LOUISA.—I suppose this custom was derived from the Jews?

MRS. V.—It undoubtedly was in the first instance, and was taken from the rite of purification, so strictly insisted on by their law. Not that we observe it by virtue of that precept, which we hold to be merely ceremonial and typical, and not now in force ; but we retain the hidden or spiritual meaning, and, therefore,

though our Church does not oblige the mother to offer the material sacrifices of the law, yet she requires from her the spiritual sacrifice of praise. This is an offering which no Christian mother can refuse to pay when she beholds the Blessed Virgin, who was sanctified rather than defiled by the birth of the Holy Child, Jesus, yet humbly and meekly presenting herself with her infant in the temple, and offering up her grateful praise.

When Holy Scripture describes excessive sorrow, it most expressively compares it to that of a woman in travail.


And if this sorrow be so excessive, how great must be the joy when released from it! In proportion then should be the debt of gratitude to the Benefactor, the donor of this blessed recovery; and hence the necessity of a public thanksgiving for women after child-birth.



The Rubric directs that, "at the usual time after her recovery, the woman shall come into the church decently apparelled." In the Greek Church this time was limited to the fortieth day, but in the Western Church the time was never distinctly specified; the "usual time" is now generally about a month, the woman's strength seldom permitting her to leave home with prudence before that period; and even if then she remains weak, she is under no obligation to present herself so soon, the Church not expecting her to return thanks for a blessing before it is received.

MARY.—Are not some ladies churched in their own houses.

Mrs. V.—There are, indeed, some persons, my dear, who so totally misunderstand the nature of this sacred duty, as to prevail upon some clergymen to *Church them*, as they call it, *at home*. A practice



inconsistent with the very name of the office, which implies that she should in the church itself own the mercy vouchsafed to her of being restored to the happy privilege of worshipping God in his house and in the congregation of the Saints. The excellent Wheatley is most indignant at the practice, and thus energetically expresses himself; "With what propriety can she pretend to 'pay her vows in the presence of God's people, in the courts of the Lord's house,' when she is only assuming state in a bed chamber or parlour, and perhaps only accompanied by her midwife or nurse. To give thanks, therefore, at home (for by no means call it Churching) is not only an act of disobedience to the Church, but a high affront to Almighty God, whose mercy they scorn to acknowledge in a church, and think it honour enough done him, if he is summoned by his


priest to wait on them at their houses, and to take what thanks they will vouchsafe him there. But methinks a minister who has any regard for his character, and considers the honour of the Lord he serves, should disdain such a servile compliance and submission, and abhor the betraying of his master's dignity. There can be no danger in the case should the woman prove obstinate; for he has a council to direct him 'not to perform this office at home, though she be really so weak as not to be able to come to church.' For if she is not able to come to church, let her stay till she is; God does not require any thanks for a mercy before he has actually vouchsafed it: but if she comes as soon as her strength permits, she discharges her obligations both to God and the Church."

LOUISA.—I think no woman who heard


or read that passage would ever wish to be churched at home again.

Mrs. V.—I am sorry to say, my dear Louisa, there are some of our sex extremely obstinate and difficult to convince. I know a most excellent and conscientious clergyman who grievously offended one of his parishioners by persisting in a refusal to church her at home, on her continued entreaties that he would do so, after he had taken the greatest pains to make her understand the subject, had shown her the passage I have just read to you from Wheatley, with many others to the same effect, but all to no purpose, the lady did not choose to be convinced.


At the last review of the Prayer Book, the Rubric respecting the dress of the woman was altered to the form in which it now stands ; but as late as the reign of



James I. it was ordered that she should come with a white covering or veil upon her head. And the order was so strict that a woman refusing to conform was excommunicated for contempt. She prayed for relief, urging in her defence that the custom was not enjoined by any canon of the Church of England; she, however, met with no redress, for the Judges consulted with the Archbishop, and several of the other Bishops, who pronounced, that as it was an ancient usage of the Church of England for the women to come veiled, this person was bound to obey. But as that custom is now become obsolete, the woman's apparel is at present left to her own discretion. It is a common defect in the Liturgies of most Churches, that there are no prefaces to introduce the several offices, and to prepare the party concerned to offer up their devotions with understanding, but



it is the peculiar care of the Church of England to instruct us *how* to perform our duty, as well as to assist us in the performance. Thus the daily prayers begin with an exhortation, and most of the offices have an appropriate preface; even this short one begins with an address to the woman, wherein the priest first excites her to a thankful acknowledgment for the mercy she has received; and then supplies her with words in which to offer up her gratitude. The prayers of the woman should not only be hearty, but public; she ought, therefore, to repeat the psalm of thanksgiving after the minister with an audible voice, for it is applicable to her alone, and the minister reads it, not on his own account, but to instruct and lead her, and, as it were, to put the words into her mouth which she ought to say. The psalms for this service are extremely well chosen; the 1st, or



116th, was composed by David on his recovery from some grievous sickness, and is most applicable to any one who has been restored to health from a state of danger. The other, the 127th, more immediately regards the birth of the child, and is very proper to be used when it is living, to excite the parents to greater thankfulness. After the psalms have been recited, the rest of the office is exactly modelled according to the rule of the great Apostle, St. Paul, which he gave to his beloved disciple, Timothy ; it consists, first, "of Supplications," in the lesser litany ; secondly, "Prayer," in the prayer of our Lord ; thirdly, "Intercession," in the suffrages or versicles ; and, lastly, "Giving of Thanks," in the concluding collect. The priest calls upon the whole congregation to join with the woman and himself in prayer, by the ancient form of

invitation, "Let us pray." That this address may be humble, it begins with the short litany, "Lord have mercy, &c.;" that it may be effectual, it is continued with the Lord's Prayer. And that all may bear a part, two or three short sentences, in the form of responses, are added, for the woman's safety and defence. And the whole office closes with a short and pious collect, consisting of a devout mixture of prayer and praise. This collect, in a great degree, resembles the form used by the old Western Church, but far excels it in style and method; the offices of some other Churches have longer and more extended devotions for this occasion than our own; but this superabundance consists more in multitude of words than perfection of sense. And I think, my children, it must be conceded to us, that if the short but comprehensive form,

we have been considering be offered up with faith and devotion, it contains all that is necessary upon such occasions.

LOUISA.—Indeed, Mama, I quite agree with you, and thank you for the explanation you have given us of this office; but as this conversation has been necessarily very short, do not think us great encroachers if we ask you to give us some account of one other service, which follows the one you have just explained, and which I own puzzles me extremely, from the various opinions I have heard people express about it. I remember once on Ash-Wednesday, a lady, a friend of our governess, Miss Hammond, came in just as we were going to prayers, and asked if we were going to church to *curse our neighbours*. What could she mean?

Mrs. V.—It is extremely to be regretted, my dear children, that there are many otherwise well-disposed persons, who

allow themselves, from a thoughtless want of consideration, to speak of serious things with a degree of levity which, I believe, they would not do if the probable consequences of such conduct occurred to them. Under such offences, I would rank all ludicrous application of Scripture quotations, with ridiculous stories of mistakes which have been made by the ignorant; for though they, perhaps, may not make any seriously bad impression upon mature persons, yet are they, at least, too apt to recur to the mind, with unpleasant association, at moments when one would most anxiously encourage very different feelings. These are the very least bad effects to be expected from such remarks, but to young persons they may be still more pernicious, by encouraging a want of reverence for sacred things, which can never be sufficiently deprecated; or by misleading them, as in

the case you have just alluded to, as to the real nature and importance of the subjects in question. I am willing to allow that the lady you mention spoke in such terms of the Communion Service, either in mere sportiveness, or that she did not really understand the nature of that very ancient and now much neglected office. But as I should be extremely sorry that you, my dear girls, should receive a false impression on the subject, either from ignorance or prejudice, I will immediately give you the best account in my power of its institution and intentions, and endeavour to rescue this venerable service from the dreadful charge you have heard brought against it.

COMMINATION SERVICE.

THE preface which our Church has prefixed to this office explains sufficiently the nature of it. It informs us that, "in the primitive Church there was a godly discipline, that at the beginning of Lent such persons as stood convicted of notorious crimes were put to open penance, and punished in this world, that their souls might be saved in the day of the Lord." The manner in which this discipline was inflicted is thus described to us by Gratian: on the first day of Lent, commonly called Ash Wednesday, from a part of this very penance, the penitents were required to present themselves before the Bishop clothed in sack-cloth, with bare feet, and their eyes fixed on the ground; and this was to be done in the presence of

the principal clergy of the diocese, who were to judge of the sincerity of their repentance. These clergymen introduced them into the church, where the Bishop received them, wept over them, and then, with the rest of the clergy, repeated the seven penitential psalms. After the psalms and prayers, they threw ashes upon them, and covered their heads with sack-cloth; they then, with mournful sighs, declared to them that as Adam had been driven out of Paradise for sin, so must they be cast out of the Church. Then the Bishop commanded the officers in attendance to turn them out of the church-doors, the clergy following, and repeating the curse pronounced upon Adam; "In the sweat of thy brow, thou shalt eat bread." The same penance was again inflicted on them the next Sunday, after which the Sacrament was administered to them.

MARY.—Oh, dear Mama, this discipline must have been very terrible!

MRS. V.—It was, indeed, my love, very severe, but most excellent consequences were derived from it, as a fear of such extreme personal humiliation would doubtless deter many, who were hovering on the brink of temptation, from plunging in headlong. Indeed, so useful did it appear to our forefathers, that it was adopted into the very earliest English Church, as well as into those of foreign countries. But in process of time, as the various superstitions of the Church of Rome corrupted many of the wise institutions of our ancestors, this ancient discipline degenerated into a formal and customary confession upon Ash-Wednesday, used by all persons indiscriminately, whether notorious sinners or not, and from whom the only token of repentance required was, that they should submit to

have their heads sprinkled with ashes and other ceremonial penances. Even these customs were afterwards still more debased by the sale of pardons, indulgences, and the commutations of penance for money.

MARY.—Mama, what is the meaning of Commutation and Indulgences?

MRS. V.—Commutation means, in fact, the change of one punishment for another, generally a greater for a less; and, in the sense in which I have just used it, it means, that if, upon confession of sin, the priest enjoined some penance, the penitent might obtain a remission of this penance or punishment upon paying a specified sum of money. Indulgences were another species of remission of punishment, and was more particularly applicable to the dead, as they were supposed efficacious in getting the soul out

of Purgatory, or that intermediate state into which the Papist believes the spirits of all men immediately pass, when separated from the body, there to be purified by punishment from the guilt which even the best must contract in this world, till they become fit for the Kingdom of Heaven. It is one doctrine of the Romish Church, that all the superabundant good works of the saints, with the infinite merits of our blessed Lord, are deposited in one inexhaustible treasury; the keys of which were given to St. Peter, and by him transmitted to his successors, the Popes, with authority to open it at pleasure, and, by transferring a portion of this merit to any person, for a sum of money, convey to him either the pardon of his own sins, or the release of any one in whom he was interested from Purgatory. These indulgences were first invented by Urban II. in the 11th century,

and were intended as rewards to those who went as crusaders to the Holy Land. But they were found so beneficial to the Papal treasury, that at length this sale of indulgences was carried to the most extravagant and even impious lengths.

LOUISA.—One can scarcely conceive it possible that rational beings could ever lend their belief to so monstrous a doctrine.

Mrs. V.—It is indeed wonderful ! But let us, my children, fervently adore the dispensations of the all-wise and all-powerful God, who can, in a moment, bring good out of evil. It was to the great abuse of indulgences that we may, in a great measure, trace the rapid progress of the blessed Reformation ; for the disgust the people had conceived against these preachers of indulgences opened a ready way for the reformed doctrine of


Martin Luther. But to return to the Commination Service. The corrupt practices which we have been considering, of selling pardons, indulgences, &c. had so loosened the bonds of discipline, that the Reformers of the Church of England found it an impossible task to restore the severe, though wholesome, severity of ancient times. They, therefore, endeavoured to supply it as well as they could, and composed a form, to be used during Lent, that season of humiliation and penance, which they called—"A Commination, or denouncing of God's Anger and Judgment against Sinners." In order that the people, being warned of God's displeasure against sin, might not be encouraged, through a want of discipline in the Church, to pursue them, but might be induced, by a recital of His dreadful judgments against hardened sinners, so to judge and condemn themselves, as to

avoid the just judgment of God in the last and awful day. The service, therefore, begins, with a grave and solemn preface, in order to bring the minds of the congregation into a serious frame, by informing them what was the ancient discipline of the Church, and how they may best supply the want of it in the present day. It then enjoins that God's curse should be read against impenitent sinners, gathered out of the 27th chapter of Deuteronomy, and that the people should answer "Amen." Now as this, my children, is the part of the service which you have heard censured, I will consider it rather at large.

The origin of repeating these curses, as we now use them, was of positive and divine institution. The first time it was commanded to Moses, and was afterwards religiously observed by Joshua; and is reckoned by Josephus amongst

those things which the Jews were enjoined frequently and religiously to perform. I have before remarked to you, that though, as Christians, we are relieved from the burthen of the ceremonial part of the Law, yet it is no disgrace to us to copy those of their customs which had a pious and spiritual meaning, amongst which, we may consider this excellent practice, so fitted to exalt our ideas of the purity and goodness “ of God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.” It cannot, therefore, be unfit for the Gospel times ; for though Christ, indeed, “ hath taken away the curse of the Law, by being made a curse for us,” it is only with respect to those who truly repent ; against the hardened and impenitent sinner the curse still stands in full force. It is, therefore, highly reasonable, that all should declare their belief in these denunciations of God’s wrath against sin ;

the good man, that he may entertain a still higher sense of the goodness of his Saviour, in thus saving him from these penalties, which all had incurred; the bad man, to awaken him from a state of ease and security before it be too late. The repeating Amen! after each of these curses can never be considered, except by the wilfully ignorant or prejudiced, either as cursing themselves or others; "Amen!" not being properly an adverb of wishing, but affirming, being derived from a word signifying *truth*; for which reason it is so often translated "verily" in the Gospel. And in the Revelations, our Lord himself is called the "Amen," or "the faithful and true witness." Nor did the Jewish people curse themselves in the cases to which I have before alluded, but merely set to their seal, that God is true, and his curses or threatening against sin to be greatly feared. As for



the sins here enumerated, they are of the greatest and worst kind, such as are threatened with condemnation, and exclusion from Heaven, in every page of the Prophets, the Law, and the Gospel. Such as idolatry, disobedience to parents, adultery, cruelty to the poor and miserable, with many others so dreadful, that those persons who wilfully commit them are in a state of condemnation, whether they answer "Amen" or not, and had better be warned to take heed, and repent sincerely and heartily in time, to which duty the whole of this service is admirably calculated to rouse them. Having declared to what kind of sins the curse of God is due, the Church has too much reason to conclude, that even the best of her children may have been guilty of some of them, and, therefore, calls upon all to repent, for fear they may incur the just judgments of God, in a most pious

and pathetic discourse, taken almost entirely from Scripture, and so excellently adapted to the occasion, that the defect must be in the hearer alone, if it do not produce the happiest effects. The Church may now justly suppose, that we are all resolved to repent, and has, therefore, prepared such penitential devotions as are suitable to such resolutions. And first, we are presented with the most beautiful of all the penitential Psalms, the 51st. It is that in which David expressed his repentance after his grievous sins, and is most expressive of the overflowing of a broken and a contrite heart. It has ever been esteemed sacred by the Church in all ages. Next follows the Lesser Litany, with the Lord's Prayer and versicles, which I have before explained, and which are to be found in all our offices. We have then three collects; the two first, repeated by the priest alone—in the other

he is accompanied by the people. They are all of them earnest supplications for pardon; and if offered up by a congregation of true penitents, with united and fervent devotion, we have every reason to believe and hope they would bring down upon them the blessings of pardon and peace. After the congregation have expressed so much penitence and devotion, have so humbly confessed their sins, and so earnestly supplicated for pardon, the minister is authorized to pronounce a blessing in God's name, which is taken from that divine form which he himself composed. So that all who are prepared to receive it must humbly kneel, and firmly believe that the merciful God who prescribed it will graciously confirm it to their infinite advantage and endless comfort. Thus, my children, have I endeavoured to show you that this venerable service is far above the attempts of

all who try to vilify it ; for as God has Himself commanded it, it must be good and excellent, and it is almost blasphemy to consider it either unnecessary or ridiculous.

LOUISA.—Many thanks, dear Mama, for your explanation. I shall always, in future, esteem this office as highly as all the others of our Church.

MARY.—Oh ! dear Mama, I am sorry to say we have now got through all the principal rites and ceremonies of our Church, and though I am much obliged to you for what you have already told us, I feel very sorry that we have come to an end.

MRS. V.—For your comfort, my dear Mary, I can tell you, that the sketch I have given you is a very slight and imperfect one, and that a wide field remains, from which you may gather much and most important information upon the

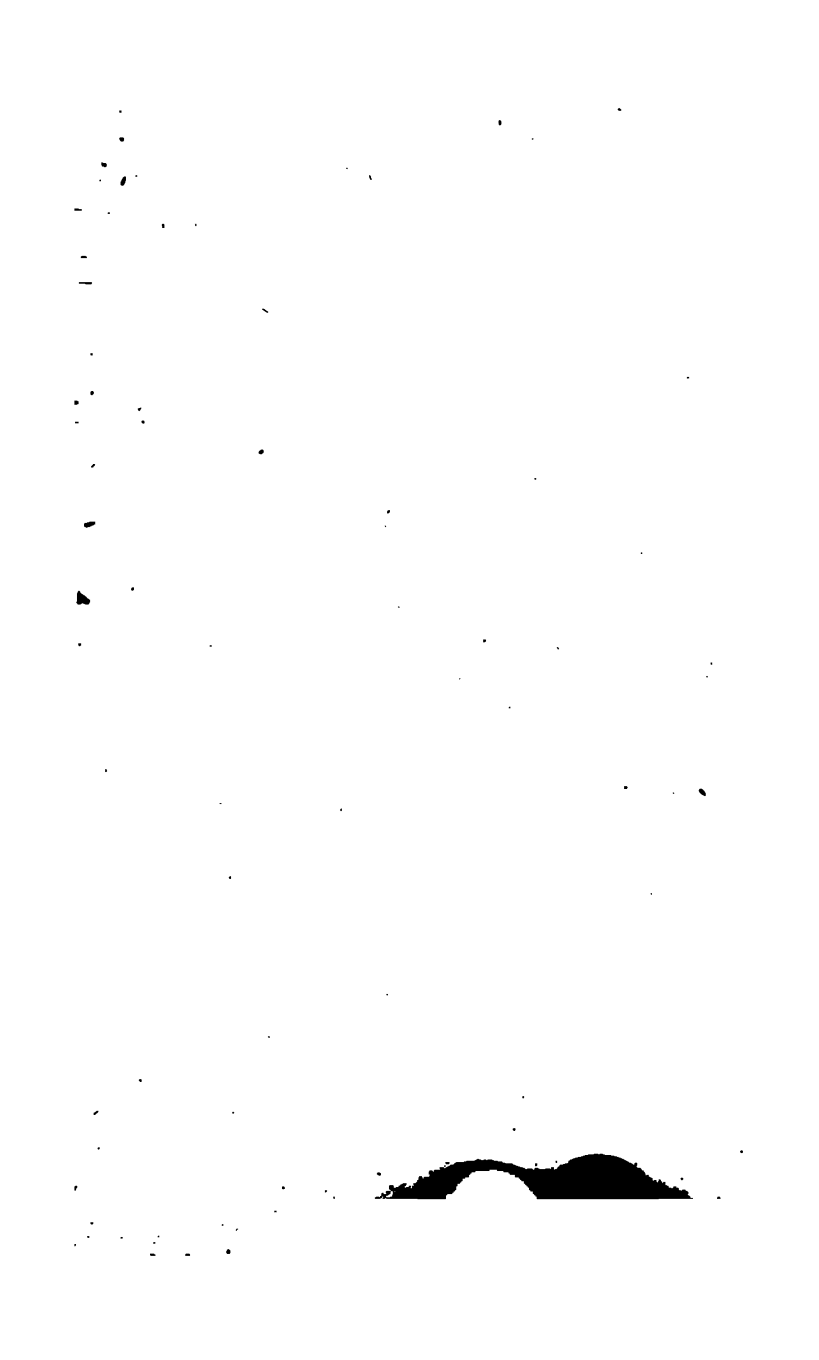
subjects of which we have treated ; and, above all, upon the most interesting parts, which yet remain untouched, of our daily Liturgy, to which I shall be most happy to direct the attention of my children, convinced, that upon a mature examination of the entire Liturgy of the Church of England, they will be confirmed in the opinion, that it presents us with the purest model of devotion which the wisdom of man has ever devised. Her doctrines are founded on the express and infallible Word of God ; her forms approach, as near as possible, to the simplicity of the primitive church ; and the different parts of public worship are most happily blended together. The object I have had in view in the short account I have already given you, my children, of the Sacraments, and other rites and ceremonies of our Church, has been to induce you to search into the inexhaustible treasure for yourselves, in

the firm conviction that such a search would serve to increase your love and veneration for that form of sound doctrine, which the wisdom of the Reformers of our National Church has bequeathed as an invaluable legacy to us their posterity.

THE END.



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